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INDIAN TALES

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FIRST DEDICATORY LETTER TO

HIS HIGHNESS SIR LAKHDHIRAJI
THE MAHARAJA OF MORVI,
K.C.S.I., K.C.I.E.

Dear and gracious Prince of India,

You have, through your great modesty, taken so long in accepting this dedication, that I find I have to include you with two others I love.

This is as it should be, for you are, to me, as dear as any relation.

This book of old India is a tribute to you who belong to the Golden Age.

Yours affectionately,

ELIZABETH SHARPE.

Limbdi,

Kathianwar.

December, 1938.

SECOND DEDICATORY LETTER TO

THE HONOURABLE MRS. GUY WALLACE

AND

LORD DUDLEY

Dearest Barb and Ferdo,

*This my latest and, most probably, my last book, I
dedicate to you as well as to one whom I love as a brother.*

*With much love, in memory of the happy times I spent at
Kempsey,*

Cousin Elizabeth.

Limbdi.

December, 1938.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

THESE stories are of an India that reaches back to the Golden Age: some of them being completely original, others partly so. Much of the material used in these latter has been collected from legend, old manuscripts and the bards of India.

In a time when the battle for new ideas may well see the complete disappearance from India of her folk-lore, wherein life was a simple thing, and intercourse between man and the denizens of the other worlds was counted an easy matter: where ideals were clear-cut—deeds, good or bad, ripening to an inevitable fruition, and pain following ill-actions as invariably, and as irrevocably, as his own shadow followed man—a collection of tales, strung together in a form acceptable to European and Indian alike, may prove of value and interest.

The writer knows of one outstanding European author who has caught the true spirit of old India in his admirable tales—Mr. F. W. Bain; and in this connection the reader will find similarities whenever there occurs the description of the great god Shiva and his wife Parvati. These were inevitable. Both Mr. Bain and the writer have drawn upon the same sources—sources not easily available to the ordinary man: ancient Sanscrit manuscripts locked up in old libraries, in temples; talks with old bards who are only seen now at the courts of the less modern Indian kings.

Any other description forced on the “moon-crested one” and his “lotus-eyed” wife, or of their home on the

summit of the Himalayas, than the one given to them in ancient literature would defeat its own purpose: that purpose being the retention of the spirit—dreamy, tender and lovely—of the old mystical India, which alas! is passing away.

As regards the biography of the Jain monk Hirasuri, the writer has chosen to retain it in this collection of stories for certain obvious reasons.

The biography is a literal translation of a four-hundred-year-old manuscript, altered, only, when the religious zeal of the narrator would out-run his good manners, or, the meaning grow too obscure.

The original writing has a picturesque naïveté which the writer has striven to retain.

Those scholars already aware of the Emperor Akbar's facile manner and morals towards the philosophers and holy men who frequented his court, will not be unduly surprised to learn from this biography that Akbar, under Hirasuri's instructions, embraced the faith of Jainism.

Yet Akbar must have been very much under the influence of Hirasuri to have written the *firman* to the Jains—a translation of which the writer has added in an appendix. It is an interesting document; it shows the dilemma of Akbar who explains, as best he can, the reasons of an order which must have puzzled many of his co-religionists, where the very necessity of the explanation is in itself a confession of the weakness of Akbar's position—for he was far from being over-sensitive of conscience—and makes one wonder if there be not more in the story told here of his conversion to Jainism than history records.

The original manuscript is written on coarse, country-made paper, and is in a calligraphy no longer in use.

The biography, though written throughout in the Devnagari character, has one very curious feature: all the

characters in the story speak in the dialects peculiar to themselves : thus, we have the monks talking in Gujarati, the courtiers in Hindi or Urdu, and the Emperor Akbar, in Persian.

Whilst in the original this makes greatly for the dramatic, it has, of course, added considerably to the difficulties of the translator.

ELIZABETH SHARPE

Limbdi,

Kathiawar.

December, 1938.

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I

THE KING'S HORSE

Time called thee, and at his voice
Thou sprangest into being
With the grace of the gazelle
And the wing'd fleetness of the eagle !
Thou neighed and the firmament sundered,
The voice of many waters thundered.
The dew of heaven was in thy nostrils,
And in thy mane the salt sea's spray.
And I, a mortal, seeing, wondered :
Art thou, like me, of heaven or earth
Or sea, beholden to created gods ?
Or learning truth in sacrifice
Hath known, in serfdom, thou art free ?

I. THE KING'S HORSE

ONCE upon a time there was a king who ruled over the whole of India. He was a great and learned man, and from all parts of the world there flocked to his court physicians, painters, poets, and great magicians.

Now, it so happened that there came to his court, one day, an old man of so strange an appearance that all gazed at him curiously : he was short, dark, sturdy and comely, and his beard, which fell far below his waist, was as black and as shining as the coat of the black horse which he had brought with him, and which was of a beauty so exceptional that the king, on seeing it, desired it exceedingly.

The old man saw with quiet satisfaction this desire of the king's, and said with a smile : " I see that your majesty is as great a connoisseur of horses as of men ; and I need not expatiate on the beauty of this horse. Apart from its appearance it has all the qualities that a perfect horse should have : it has swiftness, and the quality of immobility. In this latter it is unique, for it will stand as still as a statue for hours and never tire. For, though this horse—as should be true of every horse—has never yet been allowed to gallop to the full of its capacity of speed, it will, I promise you, gallop faster than any other horse in your majesty's kingdom. Your majesty, as a rider, is, no doubt, aware that no horse should ever be galloped to the utmost of its speed, which should be left for that one occasion alone when the life of its master is in danger. The horse is yours, great king, born in celestial stables¹ ; the only complete male—

¹ The horse is supposed to be the off-spring of one of the gods who gave his sons for the service of man.

apart from the lion¹—in the universes. Treat it well. Horses are very much like women, faithful and sensitive, whose patience is inexhaustible, but when once brought to the breaking point, will never again be so amenable or easy to manage.

“Will your majesty mount my horse and test, at least, its immobility? See how, even here in a closed court, with so many people pressing around it, it will stand fearlessly, guided by your majesty’s will. Feel, too, how comfortable is the broad back of this horse.”

The king was nothing loth to avail himself of the invitation, and gathering the reins lightly in his left hand swung himself into the saddle, whilst below him his courtiers stood in deferential curiosity. Directly in front of the king, at the horse’s head, the old man with the long black beard stood, and the king turning to speak to him found himself looking down into the brilliant black eyes.

Then the king touched the horse lightly with his heel, and the horse with perfect ease jumped the high wall of the courtyard; and the king and the horse were soon galloping along the highway out of the capital, and filled with the joy of freedom: the horse galloped with an easy swiftness never before experienced by the king.

The wind whistled past him: the objects on the way passed as quickly as those in dreams.

And the king rode on, he knew not where; and neither rider nor horse showed any signs of exhaustion, riding on and on, till the sun began to set dark red behind the palm trees; and the king, endeavouring to find a track out of the jungle, came at last to an opening of a road. He discovered, now, that he was hungry and thirsty, and presumed that his steed must be in a similar plight. Suddenly, below him, he came upon what appeared a village of sorts.

¹ The horse and lion alone of the male species are without breasts.

It was a very mean one, and the condition of the people, he saw, was miserable in the extreme : indeed, so unutterably dirty and wretched were they in their appearance that the king could not repress a shudder. But he was now so faint for want of food, so ravaged by thirst and the desire to rest, that he paused. The wish, too, to have his horse properly tended came uppermost in his mind : and this wish spurred him to ask from an approaching girl, on whose head was what appeared to be milk or water to give him to drink, and drink and fodder for his horse, and shelter for both of them for the night.

The girl, eyeing them in surprise, said : “ Oh ! Great person ! For I see by your clothes that you are of a high caste : know that this village belongs to an untouchable caste. I am one of these untouchables : therefore, it is not proper for you to drink my watered¹ milk. Nay, according to the holy writ it is forbidden to you, for the drinking or eating with a caste lower than one's own, will degrade one, physically and mentally.

For the wise have decreed that those of high birth must mix only with their compeers : and kings, especially, must never mix with any but their equals in rank, for, this forgotten, tragedy occurs.

“ So, sir, return from where you have come. Take, too, your beautiful horse and receive from a more suitable place the food and drink that will be fitting to you both.”

Hearing these sagacious words, the king was surprised, and even thought seriously of turning back : but the immediate desire for the milk in her pot to slake his thirst grew so over-powering, that holding out his hand he said rashly : “ Give me of your watered milk to drink, it does not matter. I have many Brahmins in my state who will

¹ Milk in India is ceremonially pure from whatever caste it comes ; but the water in the milk renders it impure unless received from the hands of an equal or superior in caste

cleanse me by purificatory rites : but if I do not drink now my life must surely end ; for I thirst greatly.”

Then that low-caste woman, whose name was Chandu, and who was shrewd and cunning, realised that the man before her was a king : and she decided to drive as good a bargain as possible for her pot of milk : for it is the mark of the great never to exploit a man's need, whilst on the contrary, the mean will, invariably, press home every advantage.

So she played for time, knowing, too, the more time passed, the more would the value of her milk increase.

“ This pot of milk,” she prevaricated, “ belongs to my father, who is still at work in a field close by ; and I am not able to give it to you without his permission. Let us go, therefore, to my father and ask him about the quantity of milk which he would wish to give you, and he will settle the price.”

The king saw, then, that the girl who had so little care for his need would have less for his horse ; so he loosened it, leaving it to fare for itself, realising that it would find for itself fodder and water as good as—if not better than—this village would provide : and driven on by his terrible thirst the king followed the low-caste girl into a field that was not, as she had said, close at all ; for the distance stretched out further and further till the weary king was certain that his life must at any moment now slip out of his body.

At last, they came to where a solitary man was working in a field of *bajro*.¹

This man was the girl's father, and the girl soon acquainted him with all that had taken place. The father said : “ Oh ! King ! There is only one price for this pot of milk and shelter for the night : you must marry my

¹ A coarse kind of millet much valued for food in Kathiawar and Rajputana. It is ground into flour and made into bread.

daughter. If you do not marry her, then I shall give you neither shelter nor milk."

The king looked at the girl who, though young, was extremely uncomely. The offer caused him considerable distaste: but so great, now, was his need for drink and shelter that he replied wearily: "Very well, give me the milk to drink, and I shall marry your daughter."

"Not so soon," said that mean old man cunningly, "first we must call Brahmins from the town, and have the nuptials celebrated." For the mean judge the great by themselves: and the mean do not believe that the word of the great is guarantee enough for its fulfilment.

So the weary king, dazed and only half-alive through fatigue, hunger and thirst saw himself, like one in a dream, going through a marriage ceremony with a low-caste girl, walking with her three times round the sacred fire, whilst Brahmins tied her dirty *sari* to his silken loin-cloth.

After the ceremony the king was given freely of the watered milk to drink; this done he fell down as one dead and slept till morning, when his bride prepared for him some poor food, and efforts were made to find his horse—all in vain.

From now onwards the king ate, drank and slept as one in a dream, whilst the days passed into nights, and the nights into days: and the days into weeks, and the weeks into months, and the months into a year; and the king remained in that mean house as one drugged.

Sometimes, indeed, the thought did come to him to arise, return to the forest, himself make a search for his horse, or procure a fresh one, and make his way back to his capital: or, at least, send word to his people of his whereabouts. But, always, he paused, remembering his own fallen condition: for, whether he would ride away or stay

on in this village of low-caste people, his honour, he saw, was for ever sullied.

So the years passed by, and his uncomely wife presented him with many children, and each child increased her power over him, willy-nilly, and she nagged at him from morn till night for his inherent laziness, or cajoled him, according to her need.

When he came to the end of the many gold coins which he had tied secretly in his loin-cloth, she forced him, by her rough words, to work in the fields with her father.

He did so unwillingly, but realising the necessity of providing for their large and ever growing family.

Then disease came to the village ; and struck down, first of all, his wife, and, one by one, all his children.

The king watched them die, and because they were part of his own body, wept, wondering all the while, why he wept : for life, he thought, that had treated him, a king, so evilly might treat them still worse.

His mother-in-law, weeping alternately at the loss of her daughter and grandchildren and his own survival, reviled him ; for ever demanding why he had not let them into the secret as to who he was, or from where he had come ? If he really were a king, why had he not allowed her daughter to be rich and happy and owned her as queen and her children as royal offspring ? ———

At these times the king, remembering his own beautiful queen whom he had left behind, wept ; but was glad that he had been firm in his resolve to keep the secret that, once divulged, would have reduced his beloved lady to the level of the low-caste girl.

The father-in-law, too, was not lacking in adding his quota to the abuse that fell on the king's head : Tokria, the father-in-law, thought him a good-for-nothing fellow who could not work as hard as the poorest labourer in

their village. The king grew toil-worn, bent, seriously ill and finally lay on his bundle of rags, breathing his last.

He realised he was dying and was pleased : for he hated his miserable body and hated more his mean surroundings, remembering them always in contrast with a palace and a life so far behind him now as to seem but a part of an idle dream.

He had one longing—never again to see that untouchable girl or those children that had come to him against his will, either in this or any other world.

His mind stood still on a single point : the king's heritage that had been his, the birthright that he had sold, alas ! for a pot of milk, the queen who had rested on his heart, and who had not yet borne him a child.

He was glad to leave his degraded body, and forget, forever, the horror of the sordidness of his existence. Peace swept over him wiping sorrow from his memory which now held only the happy past where he was already back in his kingdom, riding the beautiful black horse again with the joy of the conqueror and the king, and with laughter in his eyes and on his lips : remembering thus, he died and—woke again.

He was back again in the great courtyard still seated on the beautiful black horse. He was looking still into the brilliant dark eyes of the man with the long beard, and all around him his courtiers stood in silence, their arms folded on their chests in the deferential attitude of the courtier of India.

The king flung himself off the black horse, crying out hot with anger against the man and his horse : "Seize that magician and away with his horse. They have, together, given me a whole life-time of hell."

Hearing these words of the king the whole court stood amazed, wondering what they meant.

And the prime minister, bowing very humbly, said mildly : " Your majesty has but closed your eyes for two minutes."

But the guards had already seized the magician who said with dignity : " Great king ! Hear me, and judge fairly whether I have done you a good or a bad deed. I am not what I appear : and no guard of yours could dare touch me against my will even for a moment. I do not belong to your world, but am a denizen of another world, and am no mortal to fear capture or death. Know, great king, that for the ill deeds of a previous existence, that which you believed you have dreamt was ordained for you by fate, but allotted to your next birth. I had great pity for you, because I know you, in this birth, for a good and pious king, devoted to your subjects and their welfare ; and I wished that you need not leave your present body and your work of noble rule in order to suffer the ill deeds that have lain accumulated through many births, and were now ready for the sprouting into existence. The law of justice had to be upheld, and I decided that, though you must suffer for all your sins, you should yet remain the king : so that the lesson to be learnt would be learnt the quicker, and, further—nothing of desire for aught of that which is mean and low, and unbefitting to the noble, be left ; and patience, too, be learnt. Keep the horse. Know it, now, to be a gift from none other than the king of the immortals."

Thus speaking, the short man with the long beard below the waist, underwent a change ; and before the eyes of the king and his surprised court he stood there, for a moment, in the shining form of Indra himself, the king of the *devas* then as quickly vanished from view.

The black horse remained, still standing as immobile as a statue ; and the gleaming eyes in the noble head, in which mildness and intelligence shone, had in them some-

thing of the grandeur of the celestial world : it was the only reminder that the whole episode had, in reality, occurred.

Now the king, remembering the vividness of his dream, for every detail was indelibly imprinted on his mind, the name of the village, and intimate details about all its inhabitants, wondered greatly : and, the next morning, he bade a certain favourite courtier of his take a horse from the royal stables, and go through the same jungle which the king had ridden through in his dream on the black horse.

The king insisted, also, that food and drink to last several days be taken for both man and beast, lest the people of the village—provided the village existed—exact from him similar toll to that which had been exacted, before, from the king. He bade the courtier ask for a village named Pamola, and enquire whether a woman named Chandu had ever lived in it, whether she had died of cholera, and if an old man, her father, named Tokria, was still alive.

The courtier, listening to these instructions, was deeply surprised at the strangeness of his errand, but kept his own counsel ; and, obeying the king, rode as directed along the high road turning into the forest, through which he rode for two days and a half without coming out of it : he found no signs of habitation anywhere ; no food, or even water, was to be found.

Fortunately, according to the king's stern behest, he had taken plenty of both food and drink—the one in a well stocked wallet, and the other in water-bags slung across the horn of his saddle.

On the evening of the third day he came to an opening, and riding on what appeared to be a path, came at last on to the high road, where he met a man from whom he asked the direction of the village Pamola.

The man replied : “ It is a few miles further from here,

but inhabited by a very low-caste tribe whose ways of living are so horrible to the people of good repute in the village proper that they have forced them to live apart. Their village is some miles to the North of the town proper along this very road. "These people," said the man, with every indication of horror, "will eat corpses and the dead bodies of any animal they find, even if that animal has died from disease. They are dirty and a source of infection to us all.

"Their ways are evil, and they are without morals. What do you," he asked, "who are, obviously, a respectable man, want with such a village?"

The courtier gave an evasive answer, and thanking his informant rode on, wondering more and more why the king should have wished him to search for so disreputable a village, and how the king could have become acquainted with it so intimately as to know the people who lived in it by name.

Just then the courtier came suddenly upon a cluster of filthy little huts situated in a hollow, and therefore hidden till the moment of actual arrival. He alighted before one of these huts and asked of the occupants as to the whereabouts of a man named Tokria; and, when his hut was pointed out to him, enquired further whether he was the father of a daughter named Chandu who had lived in the village, and had died of cholera. They replied: "Yes."

Going up to Tokria's hut, the courtier saw a very old man whose skin was full of dirt-embedded wrinkles giving to his face so indescribably ugly an appearance as to make the courtier shudder involuntarily.

Suppressing his horror the courtier asked him: "Are you Tokria?"

And the man replied: "I am Tokria."

The courtier then said: "Have you a daughter named

Chandu?" And the old man said: "I had a beautiful daughter called Chandu, but she is now dead, married to someone called the king: and from the day of his coming to our house we have had nothing but misfortune."

And the horrified courtier asked in fear: "Has he run away?"

Tokria replied: "He has just died. I have no money to burn him, and his body is still lying in my hut. Do you want to see his body? Because if I do not get money to burn it, I shall leave it to the vultures and the jackals, or the people of the village may devour it, if they can get juice from such worthless flesh."

The courtier, not wishing to defile¹ himself by going into the mean hut, or seeing a dead body, flung a few pieces of silver to Tokria, and mounting his horse rode quickly back to the king, to whom he related all that had taken place; and the amazement of the king, listening to this corroboration of his dream, was so great that he became as one dazed, and spent the day in moody silence.

The next day, the king again sent for the courtier, and bade him, taking a fresh horse, to ride back through the forest to the village Pamola, enter Tokria's hut, inspect the dead body carefully, and tell him—the king—faithfully if it resembled anyone he knew: this done, the body should be cremated with honour.

The courtier listened to the king, still wondering what it all might mean, but obeyed him, returned to the village, where he, again, met Tokria, and told him that he had brought money for the cremation of his son-in-law.

The courtier then entered the hut where the body was lying and examined it carefully. Though six days had passed since the death of Tokria's son-in-law, the body was

¹ In India one is defiled by touching or seeing a corpse, even of one's nearest and dearest.

still not decomposed : and the courtier marvelled awhile. But remembering that the cold of that country was, at times, very severe, he believed the cold had preserved the body.

He did not like the task the king had entrusted to him, but obeyed his master, and carefully examined the body.

He saw that it was the body of one who had been tall and strong ; one, moreover, who must have been extremely handsome and well-proportioned as a youth, but whose body now bore signs of unusual toil and strain, and nothing of youth or beauty remained : the hands, especially, were terribly toil-stained, and, in examining these, the courtier had a momentary fancy that they were not unlike in shape to those of the king's ; but the next moment the courtier laughed at his crazied imagination.

He then had the body bathed and burnt with honour : and left the village followed by the lamentations of Tokria who had evidently expected much more than he had received from the courtier. For nothing can satisfy the mean.

The courtier returned to the capital, and duly related everything to the king who listened with the keenest of interest.

The king thought : " This enigma is beyond me. I shall visit the most famous hermit in India, who lives in a cave in the Aravalli hills. If this enigma is to be solved, he, alone, will be able to solve it for me."

The king then went to his queen resolved in his mind that he would set out on the morrow for the Aravalli Hills. He, accordingly, ordered all preparations to be made for his stay in those hills : and, on the morrow, the king, with his retinue, set out for the cave of the one man in India who he believed, could solve the enigma.

II

THE NEGATION OF TIME

II. THE NEGATION OF TIME

IN the Aravalli Hills of a certain powerful king of India, there lived in one of the many naturally-formed caves, peculiar to these high hills, over-looking, several thousand feet below, the plains of Rajputana, a famous hermit.

To him, one day, came on a visit, a neighbouring anchorite who had renounced the world not for any love of God, or desire of penance, but through wounded vanity : one woman had thwarted him, another had disdained him, yet another had betrayed him, all hurting his pride.

So he turned himself away from those joys of manhood which had never even come his way !

This hatred of woman, through personal motives, bred in him so fanatical a hatred of the whole sex that he preached far and wide, that all women were restless, fickle, untruthful and unchaste : and in support of these views, which he freely broadcast to all, he told the hermit of great renown the following tale, for the truth of which the anchorite personally vouched :

“In a certain town,” began the anchorite, “there lived a very young wife of a Bania.¹ This young girl had been married against her will to a man old enough to be her father ; and she had as restless a disposition as that of her husband whose parents had, with great difficulty, persuaded him, at a very ripe age, to the settling down to a married life.

This Baniani had been a spoilt child, accustomed to her own way, and had had as her companions many girls of slack

¹ The third or merchant class, according to Manu's classification.

morals; moreover, her husband, the Bania, was as indulgent to her as her parents had been, and though, at times, he exhibited some jealousy, and displayed displeasure at his wife's fickleness of disposition and desire to wander about the town, whenever a festive occasion provided an excuse, he allowed her, on the whole, to go her own way in these matters, preferring —foolish man—the path of least resistance to the harder one of correction.

“Now this wife grew very bold by reason of this latitude of her husband, and soon desired to become intimate with some man nearer her age.

“One day, whilst she was aimlessly wandering with companions about the town, she spied a certain Rajput horseman who cast on many of the girls looks of intimacy and pleasure. The horseman showed by his glances that he thought the Bania girl more beautiful than her companions, and seeing her free manner with the other women, he reined in his horse at the well where her companions had gathered to draw water; and in dulcet tones enquired, addressing, particularly, the Bania's wife, the way—which he already knew—to a certain village. The Bania's wife, nothing loth to enter into a friendship with the horseman, replied, promptly enough, and soon they had entered into a conversation apart from the others, which ended in lower tones, when a ‘rendezvous’ was discussed.

“The Rajput guessed that she, to whom he spoke, was a lady of loose morals, one whom he need not respect too much, and he asked her, casually enough, if she might not be persuaded to meet him at the house of a certain old woman who had obliged him often in the old days, where matters of this kind were involved. He gave the Bania's wife the name of the woman, and the time and the day when he would be free to come to the house.

“The foolish young woman was very thrilled at the

romantic turn the meeting appeared to have taken, and was nothing loth to follow up this new adventure.

“Moreover, the Rajput was extremely well favoured as regards looks.

“This was the first time that the wife of the merchant had contemplated actual straying from the path of virtue, though she had dallied with the idea for a long while now.

“She had no qualms of conscience, only fearing lest she be found out by her husband ; for she knew that if he did find out that she was unchaste, she stood in very grave danger of losing her nose, the cutting off of which was the permitted punishment, at that time, for an unchaste wife.

“She privately visited the old woman whose name had been given to her ; and discovered that she was a beldam of easy morals, whose house had long been used for amours of this description. The old woman told her that the young prince—for the rider was that—had, indeed, conveyed to her the message that he would be present at her house at the very hour and the day given to the young wife of the Bania.

“Now, when the Bania’s wife discovered that the young Rajput was the son of the king, she was more than ever thrilled at the intrigue she was about to enter into ; and she could hardly wait, in her eagerness, for the appointed day. When that day came she drank, surreptitiously, certain rich wines specially prepared for her old husband, containing crushed pearls and emeralds, and grew intoxicated both with the wine and her unlawful desire.

“She prepared her toilet with care, plaiting jasmine in her long, black braid of hair, smearing her body with perfumed saffron. She painted her large eyes with collyrium and chewed betel leaf with lime in it to colour her lips a bright vermilion.

“She, then, wore, with care, her gold-embroidered

bodice, her little waist-coat, a stiff satin petticoat of many pleats. She fastened many bangles on her arms, an anklet of tinkling bells on each ankle. She donned long earrings that swung from her ears, and necklace after necklace of finely-wrought gold, and lastly she tied a hand-woven *sari* from Benares round her body, the end falling coquettishly to the ground.

"Thus gorgeously attired, and feeling well pleased with the result, she left her house by a side door, and covering up her face, she arrived, unrecognised, at the appointed house, in good time for her assignation.

"The old woman received her with effusive cordiality, made her very welcome, and ushered her into a private room, where the Baniani made herself comfortable on a luxurious couch, and eagerly awaited the coming of the Rajput—her future lover.

"Now, it so happened, that that day the prince was detained by his father, and could not get away; and as the hour of the assignation passed, he thought it more than possible that the girl whom he had seen at the well would not still be waiting.

"Moreover, the amours of this young prince were many, and all of them of the very slightest character, and he reasoned, with some justice, that a woman who could so easily lose her virtue to the merest stranger need not be considered too nicely.

"Again, he was very tired; so he left his father and went into the zenana where his favourite wife tended him, and he fell asleep under her tender caresses. Waking, he completely lost the desire to meet the wife of the Bania, either that day or on any other day: but decided, out of courtesy, to send a servant to the old woman asking her to give a trinket to the wife of the Bania, and bid her, if indeed she were still awaiting his arrival, to return home.

“Meanwhile, the wife of the Bania was waiting anxiously for the Rajput to come : and as the minutes passed into an hour, and that hour passed into a second hour, she grew very impatient ; for she dared not stay too long away from her home. She called the old woman and asked her the reason of the long delay in the arrival of the prince ; but the old woman had no explanation to offer, except that he must have been unavoidably detained. She added that he often came very late for his appointments ; and this knowledge that she was but an incident in the prince’s life angered the Bania’s wife, and outraged her vanity.

“She thought : ‘I shall show him when he comes that I am not one of those many who hang about waiting for his pleasure. He will see that he, too, is but one of many.’

“She, then, took from her purse a gold piece which she offered to the old woman on the condition that she went into the streets and brought to her any man she met.

“‘If your prince arrives,’ said the merchant’s wife, ‘let him see me in the company of this other man.’

“The old woman, nothing loth, desirous too, of earning the gold *mohur*, and perhaps another from the man whom she might beguile into her house and the arms of the beautiful Baniani, did the bidding of the Bania’s wife. The bad old woman walked up and down the main streets of the town looking, feverishly, for some man whom she thought might prove a likely person. She saw, just then, coming towards her, one, who had often, in the past, used her house for his own adventures, and going up to him, she exclaimed joyfully : ‘Sir, a most lovely girl has come to my house to-day to wait for her lover, but he did not come, and she is now very angry, and has taken a vow to give her favours to the first man who comes to take them ; you are a fitting match for that most beautiful creature,

as I know you are a connoisseur of girls, I am sure this one will assuredly meet with your approval.

“ ‘If you will come to my house this girl is yours for the asking.’

“Now the man whom she had accosted became very desirous to meet this beautiful girl, and he gladly accompanied the old woman to her house. The wife of the Bania was looking through the window eagerly awaiting the return of the old woman and she saw them coming. She was horrified to discover that the old woman was bringing to her her very own husband, and she felt she was now undone. But she was a cunning girl, and women know well how to deceive. She stood behind the door which was half open and waited for her husband to enter : and as he did so, she darted suddenly out, and gave him so resounding a slap on his cheek that the tears jumped to his eyes, calling out, at the same time, in feigned astonishment : ‘You wicked creature ! I have found you out, and the tricks you play !’ ; and then she gave him another slap. Her husband was so stunned at being caught thus red-handed by his wife that he had nothing to say, and was just about to leave meekly with his wife, when the servant of the prince arriving, said to the old woman : ‘Here is a trinket for the Baniani. The Kumar was detained, and could not keep the appointment.’

“From that day onwards, the wife of the Bania was kept in strict seclusion, and no chance ~~was~~ ever again given her to deceive her husband.”

The anchorite said bitterly : “This is only one tale. I could tell you many more of the perfidy of women.”

The first hermit who had listened attentively to the anchorite’s tale, rebuked him thus : “To produce before me fruit rotten to the core, and, then, say to me, this is the

admirable fruit called mango or pear, or apple, is to malign not only the tree that bore the fruit, but the Great God who made the tree. Methinks, too, in this story of yours, the men were as bad as the women, and women alone should not, therefore, have been singled out by you for blame. The men who malign women appear to forget that women produce them. Listen, now, to me, and I shall tell you another tale and you will know that the good woman, alone, is the archetype.

“Moreover, this tale has a bearing on a dream that the king of India has but recently dreamt.¹ His dream lasted two minutes, but during those two minutes the king passed a whole life-time from youth to extreme old age : and this dream has puzzled the king greatly ; for his dream seems to have been dreamt by others as well, and appears by reason of this to be true, and not a dream at all, and yet he knows full well that it is a dream and cannot understand the meaning of it at all.”

The hermit looked down towards the path leading to his hermitage, and waited awhile as if expecting someone to come. After several minutes, his eyes left the path, and he resumed : “Once, when the earth was young, and life was simple, when man and woman alike followed, truly, a complete and perfect code of ethics, where none infringed on the rights of another, but protected them as their own ; there lived a model king and a model queen, both nobly bred, handsome and beautiful, who were devoted to each other. He worshipped all that was best in the primordial spirit of woman in her, and she worshipped all that was best in the primordial spirit of man in him ; and the more they dwelt on their respective divinities, the more they grew like them and waxed in greatness and nobility, emulating each other in holy deeds. And the king was

¹ See the King's Horse.

like the great god himself, and the queen like Uma, the beautiful, the embodiment of all womanly virtues.

"One day, when the queen was at her devotions, the room filled suddenly with light, and the great goddess herself stood before the queen, and calling her by name, said : ' Oh ! Sunderba ! You are as devoted to your husband as I am to mine. I am very pleased with you, my child, ask of me a boon. I shall deny you nothing in the three worlds.'

"Thus speaking, Uma, shining with the brilliance of many suns, smiled at the queen who, with folded hands and bowed head, said in awe : ' Great goddess ! Have you indeed blessed me by your very presence ? By your favour, beloved Mother, I have all that is needed for my happiness, which is complete except for one fear, the fear that I might out-live my husband. Give me, then, this boon, that I die an auspicious woman.'¹

"The goddess replied : ' So be it ! ' and disappeared.

"Now the queen was entirely happy ; for her one fear, that of losing her husband and becoming a widow had vanished.

"So the days passed in joy and peace. But, the king, one morning, fell ill, and by nightfall he lay dead, and the queen, sitting beside his corpse, stared at his face white and cold as marble, with large, horror-stricken eyes.

"Then they wanted to take away the corpse, but she refused, passionately, to allow them even to touch it, let alone take it away.

" ' The goddess would not have lied to me,' she told them in piteous tones. ' I tell you all, she came here, she herself, and she gave me a boon that I should always have him—my beloved husband. No, no, he is not dead ! He is tired with his illness, and he sleeps.'

¹ A woman with a husband living : a widow is counted inauspicious.

“And she lifted a *cus-cus* fan and waved it to and fro over the dead face ; and in vain did the ministers and the courtiers and her attendants tell her with tenderness and sorrow that her husband was indeed dead.

“She persistently replied : ‘I shall stay by my husband till he awakes.’

“And crouching near the low bed on which they had laid him, she whispered often : ‘Sleep not too long, my lord, for I would be reassured ; my heart is breaking.’

“So the whole night passed, and the next day and the day after ; and the queen refused either to allow the body to be taken away, or to leave it, or to eat, or to drink.

“The chief minister implored her : ‘Beautiful queen ! It is, as you know, considered unholy in our religion to keep a lifeless body for so long without burning. Let us burn the body of our lord, and perform the religious ceremonies necessary for the peace of his departed soul.’

“But the queen pointed out to them that there was no sign of decay on the beautiful face and body of the king, though both were as cold as ice. And they who well knew how good, how pious, and how chaste she was, sighed, listening sadly, whilst she assured them, earnestly, that the goddess, herself, had given her the boon that she should never become a widow.

“They begged her to eat something, at least, to foster her strength, drink something, however little ; but always she replied, in tones so sweet and gentle that tears leapt to the eyes of the listeners, that it was not meet for a wife to eat or drink before her husband, and that her lord, too, had neither eaten nor drunk for three days.

“She whispered : ‘When my lord will get up I shall eat.’ Some amongst them would have taken away the body of the king by force, but realizing their intentions, she cried out in such piercing and terrified tones that they stopped in

horror, fearing for her very reason. The minister bade them, then, not to hurt her more than she had already been hurt; and one and all sat outside her room in turns, weeping at the great tragedy that had fallen upon them and the state, and above all on the queen.

“And the queen kissing the cold body of her husband beseeched him over and over again to wake.

“But the king lay dead and cold, and heeded not her piteous request.

“In this manner, the fourth day passed; and when night again fell, she called for fresh lights which she lit; placing two at his head, and two at his feet; taking away the faded garlands from his neck, she asked for fresh ones; and all obeyed her dumbly: ministers, courtiers, attendants alike, in agony of spirit; anon imploring her to drink, at least, a little milk; eat, at least, a little fruit; but always she shook her head with its disordered locks, her wide-open beautiful eyes fixed on the face of her dead husband.

“Thus was the mournful vigil kept inside and outside the queen’s chamber, and when yet another night came, those outside heard the queen call out loudly: ‘Uma! Uma! Daughter of the mountains! Do you not love your lord even as I love mine? *You promised me a boon, a boon out of the millions at your disposal! Can it be possible that you have allowed the god of death to disregard your gift to me, and have really allowed him—as they all say—to take away my lord.*’

“Thus saying, the queen flung herself in a paroxysm of agony on the dead body of her husband, pressing her body against his cold one, hoping against hope, to infuse some of her own warm vitality into his cold, stiff form.

“And, then, the room grew strangely light, and the daughter of the snowy mountains stood before that un-

happy queen and said softly and tenderly : ‘ My daughter, why do you weep ? Your husband is not dead, and I shall take you to where he is, and you will see that he is not only alive, but happy and well. Come with me.’

“ The goddess took the hand of the queen, and together they floated over the city, and the flickering lights below them grew dim and still, then suddenly vanished altogether ; and ascending higher, the goddess and the queen came to a place where a great, white stately palace, exactly similar to the one they had just left, reared its head.

“ The queen said in surprise : ‘ This is my own palace, and no other.’ They descended together into a great hall, and the queen saw a door open suddenly, and her husband enter.

“ She would have run to him there and then ; but the goddess restrained her with a gentle touch, whispering : ‘ Wait.’ The king was dressed in his usual rich attire, and he had his favourite hawk on his wrist. Behind him came his ministers and attendants, all of whom the queen recognised.

“ The queen thought happily : ‘ So my husband is really alive ; for the whole of his court cannot have died too.’

“ Then she saw the king leave his ministers, and pass into an ante-chamber which was exactly like the one in her palace, and which she knew led to her own apartments. The goddess, with a gesture, motioned the queen to follow the king. It was very apparent that neither of them was visible to anyone ; and both entered the room where the queen saw seated on the couch no other than herself.

“ Now the queen grew frightened, puzzled, and very unhappy. The king seated himself beside that other self of hers, and both he and she began to talk together animatedly, the king smiling at her in his usual loving way.

“The queen stared at the other queen : it was, indeed, she herself, the same long black hair, the same arched eyebrows, the same large eyes, the same features, the same voice, and the queen wondered : ‘Has she a scar on her hand as I have?’ And she came nearer and looked at the place she knew the scar was, and there, indeed, was the scar.

“The queen grew more puzzled, and a feeling of utter bewilderment came over her ; whilst she wondered if she were the person who sat by the king, or the person that stood by the goddess. And which of the two was the real person ?

“And just then the queen came to mortal consciousness with a start. The lights in the room had burnt out, and she was lying near the dead body of her husband ; realising that it was only a dream, she fell to the ground unconscious.

“Her attendants rushed to her aid, and on her opening her eyes, they again implored her to take a little nourishment ; but she shook her head listlessly. Then, recovering herself a little, she asked for fresh garlands and fresh lights, asking them : ‘Are the ministers dead ? Did they also die last night ?’ Then she remembered that she too, had been in the dream, and was still alive. Putting her hands to her face, she sobbed bitterly.

“The ministers came to her, trying, however inadequately, to console her. They brought doctors, who beseeched her to eat ; but she refused both food and drink, murmuring to the body lying there : ‘My lord, you have, indeed, forgotten me, and have left me, here, all alone.’

“The night came, and once more the lights grew dim, and, again, the lady of the snowy mountains stood before her in all her beauty, filling the room with the fragrance of the three worlds, dressed in garments of silk and gold,

sparkling with beautiful jewels that adorned her from head to foot ; and Uma, touching the stricken queen with her cool hand of velvet-like softness, roused her, and said : ‘ Come, my child.’

“ And they floated out of the palace together, over lakes on which still lotuses opened their pink petals to the moon : and fragrant orchids scented the air, till they reached a certain house in a far-away town where there were sounds of lamentation.

“ The people in the house were mourning for their mother who had died that very day : they were Brahmins, and they had just returned from the burning *ghaut* after bathing. The eldest boy was about twenty-one years of age, of a very beautiful and pre-possessing countenance : and he had with him his two little sisters, one aged about twelve and the other eight. In the dim light, the queen could not see their faces ; but when she did see them, she cried out in a loud voice : ‘ They are my children : that is my son Gopal, and that my daughter Nandadevi, and that my little daughter Parvati.’ And she ran towards them as if to embrace them, and beg them not to lament for her, for she was alive, not dead, never dead.

“ But they saw her not, heard her not, and the queen’s heart was wrought with anguish at their weeping. Then the queen remembered that the father of these three children was her real husband, and that he was a Brahmin of that town, and they had been wholly devoted to each other ; and she forgot completely that she was the queen, and only remembered how she had born, and was the mother of, those three children ; and she begged of the goddess to allow her to return to them, and comfort them.

“ Then, suddenly, she was back in the palace, queen again, sitting on the floor beside the low bed of her husband, and she was very surprised, and turning to the

goddess, asked : " Is this my real lord, or was the father of those children, that Brahmin, my real lord ? For I remember now, and I love them equally. Oh ! Goddess ! I am, indeed, very confused and bewildered. "

" But the goddess, giving her no answer, smiled and vanished. And outside, the ministers and the attendants knocking, begged, as ever, that the queen should eat something, and allow them to burn their dead king according to the ordinances of the holy scriptures. "

" But the queen's only answer was : ' Fresh lights, fresh flowers, fresh garlands for my lord ! ' "

" And she sat by the side of that dead body, waiting eagerly for the night to come ; when the goddess would come to her, and she be again reunited with her lord. "

" And when night came, the goddess was beside her once more. The queen said : ' I do not understand, you must explain to me what it all means. '

" And the goddess told her that the Brahmin, for his good works, had died and become this identical king ; and his love had created for him the very wife he loved, who was the queen herself ; and seeing that the queen was still puzzled, the goddess said tenderly : ' It is only with mortals that there is such a thing as time, composed of days, weeks, months and years ; but in immortality there is no reckoning of time ; it is an eternal fluid in which forms swim, and that is why you, as a mortal, cannot realise eternity. This king, my daughter, is, indeed, your husband, and he was, also, the Brahmin, and those children were your children and will remain so, *as long as they dwell in your brain-cells and you in theirs.* But when memory passes, and records no longer exist in your brain-cells, then these, too, will pass ; and new impressions will wipe out the old, for ever changing, for ever eternal. "

" " Man makes for himself his own body, and becomes

the thing on which he meditates, and with him, too, is the power to decide, for himself, on what he shall meditate. Now, come, my sweet one, you have suffered too long in the gaining of this philosophy. I shall take you back to your husband.' So they floated again over the snowy mountains, and came to where the sun sets, and in a moment the queen was once more in the durbar hall that was so like the one she lived in on the earth below.

"She wended her way to the place of her apartments, and entered them; and, as she entered, the king's voice was heard, and the queen saw that other queen seated beside him on the couch, and the goddess whispered: 'Enter your own form, my daughter, kept in existence by your husband's love and memory'; and the queen amalgamated with that other form, and felt warm arms round her, and warm lips on hers: and the king said laughingly: 'My dear! You have been very lifeless these few days, but there is warmth in your kiss at last. What has ailed you, dear one?'; and the queen said: 'Lord, I had dreamt I had lost you,' and memory stood fixed on one point, alone, that *this* was reality, the other a dream.

"And, the next day, in the other palace, the ministers and attendants, receiving no answer from the queen, entered the apartments where she had kept her long vigil with her dead husband; and they found her lying on the bed with the dead body of her husband clasped in her arms, smiling most happily, but life was extinct.

"They burnt husband and wife together, on the same funeral pyre, weeping bitterly. Yet the forms of them all were already written on the tablets of eternity, waiting for them to re-enter at will."

The hermit paused, awhile, then said: "Woman! The beautiful form, the beautiful soul that is woman!

Poor anchorite, you have never met one. Her glory fills the three worlds. But here comes the king of India, whom I have been expecting all day, and in this story he will find the solution to his own mystery.

Time is but a fiction of the mortals."

III

THE DECREES OF FATE

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IN an old temple, in the centre of a lake, there lived all alone, an old ascetic, existing only on a little grain that a kind-hearted fisherman from the city brought him every three months in a boat.

The old ascetic would grind a daily portion from this grain, then knead it with water and form it into balls which he placed into a hole in the ground, over which he burnt several sticks gathered from the woods around.

This ball of wheaten flour, when cooked, was too hard for his old teeth ; so he would then pound it in a mortar, and mixing it with water would drink the concoction. He was unduly grateful for this little food ; and as he had, by his great austerity, acquired many supernatural powers, he decided to use one of them in granting a boon to his benefactor.

While he was thinking about this matter, he fell asleep and dreamt a dream in which the lord of Uma¹ stood before him, and rebuked him thus : “ Foolish ascetic ! Do you not know that a gift to be fitting should be made at a fitting time to a fitting person ? Once, I myself was asked for a boon by a demon who had propitiated me for lakhs of years. I was pleased with his perseverance, and agreed to give him his boon. He then asked me for a disc of metal which, if placed on the head of anyone in the three worlds, would destroy him, be he god or beast. I might have known that the destructive would only ask

¹ Mahadeva or Shiva.

for that which would destroy ; and I nearly paid for my mistake with my existence.

“The wretch, receiving my disc, expressed a desire to test its efficacy by placing it on the head of the giver—for that demon could not believe that a god would give to him so great a gift—and as the boon of a god can never fail, I was obliged to run away with all the speed I am capable of, and, so undignified was my position that, I, the greatest of the gods, was forced to take refuge with Vishnu, who very obligingly coaxed that demon to try the effect of my disc on his own head instead, with admirable results.

“Oh! Hermit! Before you throw away your well-earned penance on a man plying a mean trade, hear first from me the story of a foolish fakir who, like yourself, was tempted, because of a personal service, to give a gift to a mean man.

“In the town of Jetpur, in Kathiawar, there lived a cobbler who went every morning to the river-side with a pot of milk for a fakir who spent his whole day there, buried in the hot sand up to his neck. This cobbler did not make this gift through any devotion for the fakir, or because he was kind-hearted; he had a set purpose, like that of your fisherman, to acquire some boon from the holy man. There are some who believe that the feeding of a holy man is not, necessarily, a merit by itself, but a means to an end; and that end is always some selfish wish. Amongst this sort of people was the cobbler who had hoped that, sooner or later, the fakir would give him some supernatural gift: and it happened according to the cobbler’s desire.

“One day, the fakir, turning eyes reddened from much exposure to sun and wind towards the cobbler, asked him to request of him a boon.

“The cobbler, in delight, replied promptly that he should be given command over a jinn¹.

“The fakir, now very regretful, thought: ‘Alas! I have done wrong, and shall suffer for this; for I foresee, by my rashness, I shall be the cause of great suffering’; aloud, he said: ‘Please ask for some other boon: for the small can never command the great, and the end will be evil.’

“But the foolish cobbler persisted in his desire, and the fakir said: ‘I give you the service of the jinn, but for only three months: make full use of him during that time; because after the third month he will disappear. He will come to you at sun-set, sit on your left shoulder, and take your commands.’

“The cobbler returned to his house highly elated; and, from that day onwards, he went no more to the fakir with the pot of milk, with the result that the poor fakir, after three months, left his body, and experienced the fruits of his rashness in trusting the mean to be grateful.

“The cobbler, on returning home, waited anxiously for the sun-set. When this time was near, he partook of his meal and performed his ablutions in a manner more careful than ordinary. At sun-set he called the jinn, and, in a few minutes, there was a prickling on his left shoulder, and he saw seated there a jinn.

“The jinn asked him for his commands, and the cobbler gave them promptly.

“At this time, in the city of Ahmedabad, which is the capital of Gujarat, a certain sultan lived in the Shah-i-bagh²; and he had a very beautiful daughter whose fame had not only been spread over all Gujarat by wandering poets, but had also reached Kathiawar.

“Into the mind of this foolish cobbler came the desire

¹ A genius—a spirit.

² The name of a palace.

to see this beautiful lady in person : so his command to the jinn was to bring her in her own bed—as he had no suitable bed of his own—and put her in the middle of his room at midnight ; and, lest the king become aware of his misdeed, take her back before dawn.

“ So, in the middle of the night, the beautiful princess was brought to the cobbler’s mean room. The princess, waking up by an unusual stuffiness of atmosphere, found herself in an evil-smelling room full of leather of all description, and sitting on her bed, gazing intently at her, but not daring to touch her, a strange man.

“ She called out in fear and fainted.

“ In the morning she woke in her own palace, and thought it a dream ; but as it occurred every night she felt impelled to tell her mother of this nightly dream. Both the Sultan and the Sultana had noticed, for a long time now, that their daughter had grown very emaciated, hardly recognisable as the beautiful blooming girl of weeks ago. When the Sultana heard from her daughter of her nightly dream, the Sultana determined to sleep with her daughter. At a certain hour she heard her daughter call out, and, waking up, found that both daughter and bed had disappeared.

“ In great consternation, the Sultana sent for the Sultan, and both of them were now convinced that this was the work of no mortal, but of some jinn. They waited anxiously till dawn when, to their relief, they saw the bed of their daughter, with the daughter in it, return. They asked their daughter to try and discover who it was that took her away each night, and the name of the town where she was taken.

“ Both were relieved to learn that the cobbler had never molested her in any way.

“ So, that night, the princess, with tears in her eyes,

asked the cobbler his name and the name of the town ; and asked, also, why she was brought to his room every night ; and the foolish man replying told her that his name was Gordhan, and the name of the town was Jetpur ; and that he had brought her there because she was beautiful, and he wished to feast his eyes on her charms.

“ On returning to Shah-i-bagh in the morning, the princess gave the desired information to the Sultan who prepared an army and ordered it to reduce the town of Jetpur to ashes.

“ Now the Chief of Jetpur was a Kathi,¹ and a very brave man, and one moon-lit night whilst he was sitting on the terrace of his palace, he saw, in the distance, a large cloud of dust, and realised, immediately, that an enemy force was coming to invest his capital. He called, at once, for his ministers.

“ Now, it was the custom that the lowest caste men of the town should beat their drums to call the men to arms and warn the town ; and, in a few minutes, the town reverberated with the sound of the war-drums.

“ Far above the sound of the drums, whilst the cloud of dust in the far distance grew in intensity, the king heard bitter wailing from the river-side.

“ The Kathi chief, as was his wont when he left his palace unattended, donned quickly the garb of an ordinary man, and, leaving the palace, went in the direction of the sound.

“ Now this chief had, in his time, recited many *mantras*² given to him by his guru : one of which gave him the power to see at will the denizens of the other worlds. But, because, he, himself, was not of a very high character, he was not able to see the highest spirits of all ; for those

¹ A fighting caste : once, it is believed, rulers of Kathiawar. There is no inter-marriage between them and the Rajputs.

² Incantations.

spirits choose, only, to show themselves to the purest people.

"So, going towards the sound, he saw, by virtue of his guru's gift, seated on the lowest of the steps going down to the river, her feet washed by its waters, one whom he knew was no mortal woman.

"The Kathi chief, Bavawala by name, was an intrepid man, and he pressed forward to where the woman sat weeping. He saw that she was exquisitely beautiful, more beautiful than any mortal maiden, and her long black hair swept to her feet.

"The Kathi durbar asked: 'Fair maiden, why do you cry?'

"The beautiful *apsara*¹ stopped in her wailing, and replied: 'Oh! King! I have heard that the day after to-morrow a great battle is to be fought between you and the Sultan of Gujarat; and, for love of you, I vowed myself to the first brave man of your country who struck the first blow in her defence knowing you and your bravery, and believing it would be you—alas! for my rash vow! To-day, I learn from the lords of karma that the first man to strike a blow at the enemy, and die in this battle is the low caste man Desla who is at the head of your drummers.'

"The king laughed: 'Be that as it may,' he said, 'but Desla will certainly not strike the first blow in my battle. Rely on that.' For he was determined, in his heart, that he himself would strike the first blow.

"But the *peri*² went on weeping: 'One cannot escape what is written in one's fate. It is forbidden to the wise to make vows without looking to the consequences of those vows. I am suffering from my own folly, and that of a fakir. Why should an ascetic ask of anyone to

¹ Fairy.

² Fairy.

demand a boon from him? Does not each get his due reward, and to the doer of a good action will not reward come in time and place? Moreover, one must not benefit low-caste people beyond their deserts. If that fakir had troubled to look into the heart of the man who served him, he would, no doubt, have found something better to have given him than a mere material boon, which is the cause, not only of great misery to me, the foolish one, but to you, too, O great king!

"The king, knowing by her instant recognition of him, that she was of another world, asked her to explain. She went on: 'The reason why the Sultan is determined to raze your town to the ground is because of a certain cobbler in your town who, in serving a fakir, received from him the boon of the services of a jinn from sun-set to sun-rise. This cobbler-creature conceiving the mad desire of seeing the Sultan's daughter, had her brought every night to his room. I must confess that he does not molest her in any other way.'

"The King of Jetpur, looking intently at the peri, enquired: 'Fair one, what is the name of this cobbler, and in what street of my capital does he reside?'

"She replied: 'His name is Gordhan,' and she spat as she pronounced it, 'and he stays in the quarters of the untouchables, just before the house of Desla, whom, alas!' and she began to weep again, saying between choking sobs: 'I have to wed by reason of my rash promise.'

"The king said: 'Fair one, do not be worried about this absurd Desla. Misfortunes may sometimes be remedied, if one has sufficient coolness to judge of ways and means. I shall not allow you to suffer, dear peri. There is not the slightest chance of a low-caste man striking the first or any blow in my army, but, to be on the safe side, I shall have Desla imprisoned in the top-most turret of

the tower of my palace until the battle is over. I thank you very much for the information you have given me regarding this wretched cobbler. I believe, too, that I shall be able to do something in that matter as well.'

"Leaving her there, the king went straight to the quarters of the untouchables, and, enquiring from a passer-by, found out the house of the cobbler, and knocked loudly on the door of his house.

"The cobbler in great fear and trepidation, called through the door: 'Who is it?'

"The king said: 'The king.'

"The cobbler opened the door, and the king, entering, saw, lying on a bed of gold, a most beautiful maiden, whose face bore signs of grief and great terror. The king bade her not to fear as he had come to her rescue. Turning to the cobbler, he said: 'You are the cause of the ruin of your fellow-citizens. Bid your jinn to come again, and bid him place the princess in the finest room of my palace. Bid him, also, in future to obey only my commands, lest I call my men and get your head cut off.'

"The cobbler tremblingly called the jinn who came at once, and stood quietly waiting his orders.

"The king, turning again to the princess, said: 'Fair damsel, no harm will befall you. I shall find some means of sending you to your father as soon as he withdraws his army from my capital. The ladies of my household will attend upon you, and you will be treated with all the dignity due to your rank.' To the cobbler: 'Fellow! Do as I bid.'

"So the foolish cobbler who had, for the moment, greater power than even the king, but, yet, by reason of his not knowing how to use that power rightly, exactly obeyed the king. For habit dies hard, and the one ac-

customed to serve, obeyed; and the other accustomed to command, was served.

"The bed of the princess rose slowly in the air and disappeared from view; and, in a short time, the jinn returned, and turning to the king said: 'I am now at your disposal: what are your further orders?'

"The king said: 'Go to that army, which is even now advancing on my town, and bring to my palace the Sultan and ten of the principal captains of the army; deprive them of their swords, but put them in another room, so that I may give them back to them later.'

"The king then returned to his palace, and gave orders; first of all, that the low-caste man, Desla, should be imprisoned at the very top of the turret of his palace, but be given a drum to beat, so that he might not guess, or wonder, at the reason for this order; and then to his ministers to guard well the Sultan and his captains.

"It was now dawn, and the king, going first to the queen told her all about the princess, and begged her to see that her every need be attended to properly, and she be comforted; and that she be told also that her father was in the adjoining room. Next, the king went to the Sultan.

"The Sultan was indeed in the next room, walking about very much perturbed, but striving to preserve his dignity.

"The King of Jetpur, entering, bowed to him, and told him that a great injustice had been done to him as King of Jetpur. The Sultan, in too great a rage at being in a place without his wish, did not reply immediately.

"The king went on: 'I am the King of Jetpur, and, because of the folly of a fakir who gave a boon to one of the lowest of my subjects, a boon he has misused, do you wish to demolish the whole of my town?'

"The Sultan said: 'The misery of my daughter is

the fault of your subject ; and I am determined to demolish the whole of your town, if indeed you are the King of Jetpur.'

"The king replied : ' I am the King of Jetpur. Yet, the fault is due to one man alone, a cobbler. I shall punish him, I promise you.'

"The Sultan said : ' You shall deliver him up to me, and the dogs shall tear him to pieces.'

"The King of Jetpur replied : ' Even the lowest of my subjects has the right of protection from me. Moreover, he has not injured a hair of your daughter's head. He shares, but, the fault of a fakir who gave to him—a man unable to use even small things advantageously—so great a power.'

"The Sultan, who was a great believer in fakirs, asked in a more moderate voice : ' What then do you propose to do ?'

"The king replied : ' I have brought ten of the captains of your army here, and they are in the next room ; bid them go to your army and tell them to return to Ahmedabad. Unless that is done, I propose to keep you and your daughter who is with my queen, as hostages.'

"The Sultan started on hearing that his daughter, too, was in the palace. He said quietly : ' Call my captains.'

"The king motioned to his attendants that they should be brought in to the Sultan ; asked them also to give them food and see that all should be well treated as befitted their rank.

"Having done this, he left the room.

"The Sultan's army was advancing now very rapidly, and was almost below the palace walls. They had come by forced marches much quicker than the king had anticipated, driven on by the discovery that the Sultan and

ten of their finest captains had been abducted from their very midst.

The Sultan then agreed to send his captains to stay the fight, provided the cobbler was banished from Jetpur, and three villages of Jetpur be given to the nearest mosque, so that, in future, no fakir might be in need of the services of anyone, let alone those of a low-caste man.

“ ‘Keep me as a hostage,’ said the Sultan, ‘but return my daughter the way you brought her here, lest her mother die of grief.’

“ The king said : ‘I shall do this with the greatest of pleasure.’

“ So, at sun-set, he called the jinn, but he did not come. Hastily the king sent for the banished cobbler, and bade him, too, try to call the jinn ; but the jinn answered neither the summons of the one nor the entreaties of the other, for the third month had been completed the night before.

“ The Sultan’s army then came pouring into Jetpur ; and the sweeper Desla who was on the top of the turret of the tower beating his drum violently, enraged at seeing one of the Sultan’s men try to climb the palace walls, taking his drum with him, climbed on the small parapet, and jumped on to the top of him ; and so great was the force of the impact that the soldier, as well as Desla, was killed.

“ So, despite the good sense of the king, that which was ordained, happened.

“ Desla went to the beautiful peri : Jetpur was sacked, the king killed in battle : his queen committed *suttee*, and the other ladies of his household were added to the Sultan’s harem.

“ The Sultan returned to Ahmedabad by slow stages, taking his daughter with him, having already sent word to her mother, by quick messengers, of her safety.”

The hermit listened intently, and when the great god

had finished, said : " Mahadev ! I shall give to that fisherman only my blessings."

The lord of Uma replied : " It is more than enough," and was about to depart when the hermit said :

" Great one ! I find it difficult to reconcile myself to the sad fate of the King of Jetpur and his innocent queen, especially as they had done a good deed in succouring the unhappy princess."

The great god replied : " No injustice is done to anyone by the lords of karma. The entire blame of this sad episode rests on the callousness that allowed in a state of plenty, even a single man to die of hunger, let alone a fakir whose thoughts were only of God. Is it not shameful that the one really holy man in the State of Jetpur should have even been in need of food ?

" In setting fire to the tail of a monkey, Ravana had his whole city burnt.

" The fire of that holy fakir's hunger has burnt Jetpur, destroyed its king, its queen and its people."

But the hermit was not completely satisfied, and Mahadeva smilingly said : " Hear then the tale of the two swans."

IV

THE TWO SWANS

IV. THE TWO SWANS

IN the very heart of the snowy mountains,¹ there was a beautiful lake, as clear as crystal, and white as the full moon, reflecting, as it did, the surrounding snowy mountains. And on its shore, in a cave, there lived an old hermit who had been practising austerities for years beyond count, living on air until the snow melted, when he dug up a few roots whose virtues he knew so well.

Now, on the surface of that lake, two beautiful swans swam to and fro, billing and cooing, or pausing, asleep, their heads under their wings, still as exquisite pictures on painted water.

The hermit, watching them thus, one day, felt his heart overflowing with delight at this beautiful sight; and remembering so many other swans who like these had existed but a span of time, so much compassion filled his heart at the thought of the life of these beautiful creatures being so lamentably short that, following a sudden impulse, he raised his hands in blessing and said to the two swans: "Oh! Exquisite creatures! Remain thus, in this form, here, on this beautiful lake, for, at least, if not more than, a thousand years."

And, speaking thus, the hermit turned away well pleased, and went into his cave, where he sat down on his deer skin for his meditation.

Now, it so happened that, two *apsarasas*² had, a little while before, entered the bodies of those two swans after ruthlessly ejecting the real inmates. The hermit's words,

¹ Himalayas

² Denizens of the lower heavens.

which would have been a blessing to the real swans were, now, by the fact of the *apsarasas'* mischief, a curse to those intruders from a higher world. They had no desire, whatsoever, to spend a thousand years of their existence in the form of swans. To be swans for an hour or so was pleasant enough pastime for them; but to be swans for a thousand years was to the *apsarasas* a penalty indeed.

However, nothing could be done about the matter: for the hermit's penance was so great, and his love of truth so strong, that his words, once uttered, were written across the universe in letters of gold, and the Lords of *Karma* seeing them thus written in the ether, copied them down into their books.

This being so, none of the magic lore of the *apsarasas* could avail against the power of the hermit's blessing.

Now, the companions of these *apsarasas* began to miss them from their home in the lower kingdom of the heavens, and, becoming anxious, sought to discover their whereabouts; and soon found that they were confined in the body of swans, and were doomed to remain thus for a thousand years.

The *apsarasas* gathered together to discuss what could be done and the remedies that ought to be taken.

One of them said somewhat indignantly: "Are we to be deprived of these our companions for a thousand years, just because an old hermit who should be devoid of desires, wishes to feast his eyes upon them? Let us undo this wretched blessing."

So saying, they went together in a body to one of the lords of karma who was just then totalling up the day's records, and narrated to him their grievance.

The lord of karma listened gravely, as is the wont of those on whom responsibilities lie heavy, and when the *apsarasas'* excited comments had died down, he bade them,

without emotion, to disperse and forget the matter for a thousand years. Nothing, he told them, could be done. The hermit's blessing would stay by virtue of the fact that in all his life he had never spoken a single untruth, and had gained "*siddhvachan*."¹

On the *apsarasas* hearing these fatal words, they returned perforce to their homes, chattering, all the while, like a number of magpies.

They then began, amongst themselves, to form plans by which they thought of annulling the hermit's "*siddhvachan*," and thus defy the fiat of the lord of karma.

"Let us try," they said, "to break this old man's certainty of the word, and make him tell an untruth, and untruth shall wash out truth."

They were wise, but not wise enough: for they forgot that though the law they had expounded did apply sometimes, though temporarily, in the lower worlds, it could never come in force in the higher worlds. There—time, place and the fitness of the person concerned lie recorded in a single moment, in space: for, in the higher worlds, truth is eternal.

These *apsarasas* determined to put their plan into force and combat the old hermit's love of truth.

They realised that they could only succeed in their adventure by putting into play another virtue, and staking that virtue against the truth of the spoken word.

One of them, therefore, taking on the form of a panting doe with eyes out-starting from her head in terror, rushed, one morning, into the cave of the old hermit: and following her, hot haste, almost on her very heels, disguised as hunters with long spears, came the other *apsaras*.

The one disguised as the head huntsman, getting down from his mountain pony, asked the hermit in the rude

¹ Certainty of the word.

manner of this kind of man : “ Old man ! Where is our deer ? Is it in your cave ? ” As he spoke he assumed a manner so threatening that the hermit grew afraid, not for himself, but for the deer, fearing that it was their determination to kill the poor creature whose panting in a far-off corner of his cave could be distinctly heard. They appeared to have no respect for the hermit, who hesitated in his reply. He knew that his silence was fatal ; yet desire for the truth was so strong in him that he could not bring himself to deny the fact of the deer being in his cave : on the other hand, he had no desire to see the poor creature done to death before his eyes and that, too, in his very own cave.

Whilst he was turning the matter over in his mind, the doe, to the surprise of all, rushed out and made off towards the mountains.

The hunters were greatly discomfited, and returning to their home in the heavens enquired of the *apsaras* who had played the part of the doe so well, the reason of her sudden emerging from the cave, just as the plan they had formed appeared to be working.

She showed them, then, her pretty feet, the soles of which had been burnt black.

So great, she told them, was the austerity¹ of that hermit, that the cave itself had power to burn that which was false and untrue. The ground beneath her feet, she said, had scorched her feet so severely that it was impossible for her to remain in that place an instant longer.

The *apsaras* were now forced to think of another stratagem.

One of them, taking on the form of an old and decrepit man with signs of great travail writ heavily upon him, came to the opening of the cave. Remembering the

¹ Tapas—austerity. Also means heat. This is a play on the Sanscrit word.

apsaras' feet, however, he carefully avoided entering the cave, and fell instead before its entrance in a crumpled heap.

The hermit, hearing groans, rushed out to succour and resuscitate the old man. The holy man gently chafed the withered hands, brought water which he tenderly poured into the open mouth, and was very anxious.

The *apsaras* looking up saw the troubled face of the holy man bent solicitously over him, and meeting the kindly eyes of the hermit grew suddenly ashamed of his deceit, and even thought of abandoning the adventure. But, remembering his friends, he regained his confidence, and said : " I am under a curse. I am sure to die unless you say to me : ' You shall live.' " The old hermit who cursed me said that unless another hermit, with equally great austerities, declared over my corpse : ' Thou art alive,' I should surely die."

The hermit said : " All must die. Thou art old and decrepit. Why do you desire life so much ? "

The *apsaras* said : " I implore you, holy hermit, to say these words over me after I die, so that the heavens may record them, and the lords of karma knowing your *siddhvachan* alter the fate of my death."

The hermit said sadly : " My son, all must die at the end ; and, methinks, it would be better for you to leave the old garment you are now wearing and don a fresh one. How many more years do you wish to live in this decrepit old body ? "

The *apsaras* said hastily : " At least five, holy hermit, to enable me to perform certain ceremonies and fulfil certain duties."

Thus saying, the old *apsaras* fell, to all intents and purposes, dead at the feet of the hermit.

The hermit grew sad, and touching the body discovered it cold and fast stiffening. In sore distress, looking up to

the sky overhead, he prayed thus : " Great God ! I have never troubled Thee for a boon for myself ; but Thou, who art so kind, please bestow five years of my life on this poor man, enabling him to live on in this form which he values so greatly, and perform his wished-for ceremonies and duties."

The great God heard the prayer, and granted it immediately. In a moment of time, the old man stood erect and alive, and greatly mortified : for his condition, confined in the body of a decrepit old man for five years of human time, was far worse than that of those other companions of his who, at least, lived in the bodies of two beautiful swans.

The other *apsarasas* saw now that the great God himself protected the virtuous man in the upholding of *dharmā*¹ and prevented the losing of one virtue in the protection of another.

Now these *apsarasas* remained for some time in a dilemma as great as that of the husband of *Rati*² whose husband, in trying to subdue the great god with his arrows, was, himself, reduced to ashes.

One of the *apsarasas*, wiser than the rest, then said : " This hermit is a good and kindly person, and the fate that has overtaken our companions is really due to their own folly alone. Why blame the hermit ? Rather let us go to him, tell him of our difficulties and our companions' mishap ; surely, when he hears all, and learns that they are not swans but *apsarasas* he will release them from his blessing which, for them, has become a curse."

Thereupon this wise *apsaras* with two others, went to the hermit, and with arms folded meekly on their breasts, acquainted him with all that had happened.

¹ Religion : duty : virtue : the law.

² The Indian Cupid who in trying to subdue Shiva was burnt to ashes by the fire from the third eye of the great god.

The hermit, hearing their tale, was greatly distressed.

"Alas!" he said, "however well meant, it is unwise for man to interfere in the laws of nature which are fixed by great purposes. In interfering thus, I have wronged two *apsarasas* without even knowing, till now, of the wrong.

He thought for awhile, and, then, said sadly: "It is impossible for me to alter my words, or do anything in the matter of reversing them; for, if truth goes, everything goes and religion is lost; but, do you enquire from your companions where are the original occupants of the bodies of the swans? If they can be brought back and placed in their homes, the wrong will be righted; for my intention was not to imprison two *apsarasas*, but to give to those beautiful swans the joy of existence, in their own beautiful form, for a thousand years."

Then those three *apsarasas*, enquiring from their friends, imprisoned in the form of swans, as to what had happened to the original occupants, learnt that those selfish *apsarasas*, misusing their magical powers, had transferred them both, for their temporary sport, into the bodies of two dead ants they had found under some plants growing round the lake; and, indeed, but for the hermit's blessing meant for them, they might have been forgotten altogether: for those absorbed entirely in their own pleasure are always selfish.

The companions of the *apsarasas* returning to the hermit gave him the required information.

The hermit, hearing of this deed of their friends, became very sorrowful, and remonstrated thus: "Oh! Friends! Alas! that those to whom the bodies of two beautiful swans are an unwelcome and obnoxious prison have deliberately made these creatures of the waters and air, through no fault of their own, for a passing whim, to crawl as insects on the face of the earth! Alas! Denizens

of the air ! You who feel so much the tragedy of remaining swans for a thousand years, which, counted in your long span of existence, is but a day in the life of an *apsaras*, had your companions no pity for those two rightful, beautiful denizens of water and air, that they should have been so callous ? And by virtue of the magical powers, conveyed upon them by Indra, the god of the *devas*, have harboured for a single instant the thought of ousting them from their lawful place in evolution, let alone the still more wicked thought of degrading them to the lower body of insects ? Ah, me ! Ah, me ! ”

The *apsarasas*, hearing these plaintive words of reproach from the old hermit, and seeing how unhappy he had become, hung their heads in very shame.

The hermit went on in a calmer tone : “ However, I shall try to remedy my own mistake. Let one of your friends leave one of the swans : let him or her seek for the original inmates, and as a fit punishment for my desire—and I had thought that in me all desire was dead—my desire to keep these lovely creatures on this most beautiful of lakes longer than their allotted span of life—I shall enter one of the bodies. Bid the freed one of your companions seek out the original occupants, and let good repair evil.”

The lady *apsaras* offering herself, the hermit bade her leave the body of the swan, and he then entered its body through its ear, according to the procedure of the *shastras*¹ meditating, all the while, on the sacred word Om.

The lady *apsaras* soon discovered one of the ants walking disconsolately about the shore, and without troubling to search further for its mate, the *apsaras* caught it up and immediately releasing her companion, the drake found itself in possession of its own body ; whereupon the two selfish *apsarasas* flew off together, laughing at the thought that

¹ Holy writ.

they had, after all, outwitted the old hermit, imprisoning him in their place.

Days passed into weeks, and the weeks into months, and the hermit still remained in the body of one of the swans, the other being occupied by the disconsolate mate of the swan.

The hermit, floating on the still lake, wondered often whether the *apsarasas* had, indeed, abandoned their search for the drake's mate ; or had forgotten them altogether. Believing well of everyone, the hermit was loth to believe that they had deliberately left them all to their fate. He was finally forced to the conclusion that he was indeed left to remain a thousand years in the body of a swan, and his companion remain mateless and that mate retain the body of an ant and die.

He did not grieve for his own fate, but he was very sad for the beautiful drake who swam about so restlessly, splitting the silence from time to time with lamentable calls, searching in vain through the reeds for his mate : and sadder, too, thought the hermit, was the fate of that mate, doomed to roam disconsolate in the body of an ant.

One day, it so happened that, a pilgrim who came every year to the hermit's cave arrived again, exhausted and tired, only to find that there was no sign of the hermit.

The pilgrim was much perturbed, and after a vain search lay down in despair at the mouth of the cave, vowing to the gods that he would neither eat nor drink until he had received the *darshan*¹ of the hermit, or learned of the fate that had overtaken his loved *guru*.

The hermit who from the lake had seen him come, and had heard his vow, became greatly distressed ; for he feared very much that three evils were now at hand ; either his disciple, the pilgrim, must lose his life or break his vow ;

¹ Holy sight.

or he, the hermit, be forced to abandon the body of the swan.

In this dilemma he remembered the great Yogi Shiva, and Shiva put it into the heart of Indra, the king of the *devas*¹ to fly with a companion over the snowy mountains, and descend on the shores of that very lake.

Indra, like the hermit, enchanted with the beauty of the two white swans on the crystal lake, saw, at once, by virtue of the supernatural power that is innate in the immortals—the power that gives infallible discrimination—that one of them was not a swan at all, but a holy hermit ; and standing still in introspection, Indra read, written on the ether, all that had happened, and, with the same inner knowledge of the gods, discerned, too, in a thicket close by, an old withered ant, in whose body life was almost extinct, kept alive, as if by a miracle, because of the hope in her small heart of reunion with her loved one.

Indra thought : “ Now, here is a holy hermit who has committed but one very minor fault in his life, if fault it be counted ; for I, too, with him, desire that these two beautiful creatures should remain to disport themselves, and delight the hearts of gods and men, for a longer period than their allotted span of life ; and, yet, this hermit suffers because he will not use his austerities to benefit himself, even though he uses them freely for the benefit of others. He does not know that, by virtue of these very austerities, his mere words, alone, have been registered by the lords of karma, and will count for all time. Even if he discarded the body of the swan, these lords of karma must, of a necessity, uphold what they, themselves, have registered, and seek, for themselves, the original inmate. But, now, I am here, let me come to the rescue of this simple-hearted, good man who

¹ Angels : literary gods.

uses his hardly acquired supernatural powers for the benefit of others, and never for himself."

Thus cogitating, Indra said to the hermit: "Oh! Holy man! Return to your body, for here is the rightful resident of the swan's body."

Then the hermit, by virtue of his own truth, recognising truth when he heard it, left the body of the swan, and in the twinkling of an eye, the female ant had left that body and was once more in her own body, where, united with her mate, she gave vent to her happiness; both falling into such transports of joy, such ecstatic billing and cooing, that, the onlookers beholding them thus, felt, mingled with compassion, the deepest pleasure at their re-union.

The hermit, then, entered his cave, and the pilgrim who had come so far to see him, falling at his feet, thanked God and shared the holy man's frugal meal.

But Indra who, himself, was not unmoved at the delight of the two swans, directed his mind to the cause of all this pain, and found it in the indifference of two of his *apsarasas* who, beyond their own selves, cared not a fig for anything else, either on the earth or in the three worlds.

Indra, the god of the thunderbolt, grew grave and displeased: "This type of person," he thought, "is a danger to the well-being of the universes."

He pondered, further, and saw their punishment already written in time; for, no one, in all the universes, can safely sin against another being; for the lords of karma mete out just punishment to be awarded in due course, not in revenge, but for a lesson to be learnt, and if not learnt after one punishment, that punishment must surely be repeated till, in due course, the lesson be remembered for eternity.

The memory of joys and sorrow is transient; but the

residuum of experience left from these emotions is carried over until the lesson to be learnt is thoroughly conned.

Indra saw that those two selfish *apsarasas* had even now fallen into the world of mortals ; the one born as the King of Jetpur, and the other as his wife ; and they were to suffer for that very same fault of indifference and callousness to others. Reading the future, Indra saw that the one would finally be killed in battle, and the other, his wife, would enter the funeral pyre.

He saw, too, what the sorrowing courtiers of Jetpur could not see ; that nowhere in the universes was there need for sorrow at all ; for, almost with the dying of the last ember, they would embrace each other again as *apsarasas*, shuddering at that which they would believe an awful dream, but, somewhat, alive, at last, to the tragedy which indifference to the welfare of others might bring ; for those who have been given the power to alleviate suffering and have failed in their glorious mission are cursed of the gods.

V

UNFITTING GIFTS

V. UNFITTING GIFTS

Now, when the daughter of the snowy mountains heard her Lord dissuading the hermit from giving a boon to the man who had served him, she said : " What then, my lord ! From whom can those who serve expect gifts, except from those who have them to give ?

" Is it not a fact that unless a woman give birth to a hero, a poet, a sage or a giver, she should not lose her beauty in bearing children, but for ever remain barren ? Are there not in this world few enough givers that you must reduce even these numbers ? Oh ! My Lord ! I do not understand this act of yours, and should like to have things made clear in my mind. Would it not be sufficient to give in the name of God, and leave the result to Him ? "

The great god smilingly said : " Oh ! Fair one ! Do you always thus want to shift the responsibility of an act ? Already man has settled upon God the result of all his own sins, and the sins of the great universes. May we not leave man's virtues, which he claims exclusively as his own, for himself ? You have forgotten the very crux of my teaching in this matter. I have not denied the giving of gifts to those in need by any great soul ; but I have insisted, and rightly, that great gifts should be made to the great alone, and great power, above all, be given only to the great. This is the universal law ; but man has introduced the new one of indiscriminate giving ; one, which cutting across the law of justice, has resulted, and will continue to result, in chaos.

Moreover, beautiful one with eyes like the lotus ! A man should not be raised out of his station too suddenly ; lest,

when he falls, he be more miserable than before, and slander the one who raised him ; blaming that one alone for his misfortunes rather than his own inadequacy. Listen, I shall tell you another story :

“ Once in the heart of the blue mountains, there lived a *yogi* dear to my heart ; for his presence was neither a burden to himself, nor to anyone else in the world. So holy did this *yogi* become in course of time that he became, almost, incorporate with my very self.

“ One day, the king, hunting in those mountains, came across the *yogi*, and entering the cave prostrated himself before the holy man who gave him his blessings. The king asked him if he needed anything, and the *yogi* smilingly replied : ‘ No.’

“ The king, on leaving the cave, saw in a corner a very mean-looking urn which he surmised was used by the *yogi* both for drinking and for his ablutions.¹ The king then commanded one of his attendants to bring, surreptitiously, two golden ewers from out of his treasury, and had them put in a corner of the cave. It was not till after the king had left that the *yogi* discovered them, and as the king had removed the mean-looking water vessel, the *yogi*, according to the rules of *yoga*, which obliged him to accept everything that came by chance without elation or depression, was forced by circumstances to use, at least, one of these golden urns ; though it was troublesome on account of its weight.

“ Now, one day, when the *yogi* was performing his ablutions at the river, a covetous rascal saw the ewer ; and determined in his mind to steal it that very evening whilst the *yogi* was in meditation. So the thief entering the cave, picked up the ewer and made off as fast as his legs

¹ This is counted ceremonially impure in India where the goblet for drinking is always kept separate.

could carry him in the direction of the town. The *yogi* had seen all in his meditation, and, after a few minutes, gave chase, calling upon the thief, every now and then, to stop; hearing which the thief flew faster than ever. But the *yogi* whose body was light owing to years of fasting, and who, knowing the science of breath, had better control of his wind, overtook the thief who, seeing a crowd gathering and knowing all was lost, flung down the golden ewer, and touching the feet of the *yogi* implored pardon. But the *yogi* said mildly: 'My friend, you have made a great mistake. It is I who should ask your pardon in allowing myself to keep anything so costly as to arouse your cupidity. Your need for this ewer appears to be far greater than mine, and I have detained you merely to give you its sister which you overlooked in your hurry. Take it, too. I should be sad if you were hereafter tempted to steal in future.'

"Saying this the *yogi*, putting the second gold ewer into the thief's hands, returned to his cave, leaving the thief to face the jeers of the crowd. The *yogi* then began to search again for the original vessel; but, realising that the king had, indeed, taken it away, decided to use his cupped hands alone, both for ablutions and for drinking.

"Now, in hunting about in the corner of the dark cave for his water-pot, it so happened that the *yogi* disturbed a nest of young mice. They scampered here and there; their mother vanished, leaving the little ones crawling helplessly about. The *yogi* waited for her return with great anxiety. 'This,' he thought, 'is sure to disturb my meditation. Alas! I should never have kept this gift of gold, fitting for a king but unfitting for a *yogi*.'

"Night fell, and still there were no signs of the mother. Much perturbed, the old *yogi* wondered how he could give these little things food, when he, himself, lived only on air, and thus thinking he fell into a trance. He was

awakened from his meditation by the noise of a cat who had demolished all the young mice, except one rather hardy fellow who had escaped into a corner. The *yogi* drove away the cat, and went out daily to find some grains of rice to feed the mouse till such time it was able to feed itself. 'Alas !' sighed the *yogi* again, 'this small creature takes up much of my time.'

"The mouse soon grew large and strong, and the *yogi* went back to his meditation, happy again to be merged in his thoughts of God. The cat came in again, and the *yogi* seeing it in meditation roused himself and drove it away. The *yogi* soliloquised : 'Something must be done ; I do not like this poor, little thing to share the fate of its brothers and sisters and its mother. I cannot continually be disturbed in my meditation either. I must do something.'

"He thought over the matter for some time, then, brightening up, decided to turn the mouse into a cat, strong enough to resist that other cat. So, by virtue of the supernatural powers that follow *yogis* like the shadows thrown by light, the *yogi* turned that mouse into a very fierce cat.

"All went very well for some time, when the *yogi* was again aroused from his trance by the knowledge that, midst a perfect tornado of sounds, his cat was in danger from a dog. The *yogi* rescued the cat, and, driving away the dog, felt there was nothing else to do but to turn the cat into a dog, as large and as strong as the one that had attacked the cat.

"Peace now reigned for some time ; but when the rains came, a prowling panther, smelling that which is a great dainty with its kind, followed the dog into the cave, and the *yogi* decided finally to turn the erstwhile mouse into the king of beasts—a lion. This done, he bade him leave

the cave and fend for himself, for he had nothing now to fear from his kind. So that one-time mouse, by the great boon of a *yogi* who was too kind-hearted, became the lord of the jungle, and his roar could be heard from sunset to dawn.

"The *yogi*, relieved, now, of all fear for the mouse, resumed his meditations.

"Now that lion, though his body was that of a lion, had the heart of a mouse; and he had not forgotten his humble origin.

"As the days passed, his one thought was not of his power, when all the other creatures of the jungle fled scurrying away from him, but of the fact that he was mean, and all might come to know it one day; for the *yogi*, thought the mouse judging others by his mean self, might whimsically wish to return him to his original position of a mouse; thinking thus, the pseudo-lion grew to hate his benefactor with a dire hatred.

"Into his heart, one day, there came a wicked thought. He soliloquised: 'If I kill the *yogi*, no other person will ever learn of my humble origin, and I shall be respected as a lion till the end of my life. I shall kill him when he is in his meditation.'

"Thus deciding, the lion, assiduously sharpening his claws, began to prowl round the cave waiting for the time, which he knew so well, of the evening meditation. But the *yogi*, by the same power that had let him see danger to the mouse, saw danger to himself and, opening his eyes, saw the lion standing there, and read the desire in his heart.

"'Why have you come?' asked the *yogi*.

"The lion abashed replied: 'Only to look upon my benefactor.'

"The *yogi* knew that those of low origin are always fearful of those who might come to know of it: and he

knew, also, that it is fear, alone, that breeds hatred. He regretted the moment of weakness that had made him turn so mean a thing as a mouse into a noble lion.

"So he willed the lion back into the mouse, and turning him out of the cave said: 'Now, my friend, you must learn, with others of your kind, to protect yourself.'"

Mahadeva paused, then continued smilingly: "You see, O dear wife, how that *yogi* very nearly paid with his life for his raising of the insignificant to a position of power: unfitting gifts, whether they be from king, or *yogi*, bring trouble."

Parvati, nestling close to her lord, said: "Tell me another tale of this kind, great lord. I am glad, now, you have advised the hermit to give the fisherman nothing beyond his blessing; for the blessing of a holy man is no small thing. It annuls sin."

Mahadeva replied: "O large-eyed one! Any material boon foreign to the nature of the recipient brings evil: listen, then, whilst I tell you another tale.

"There was, once, a certain priest who lived in a temple in the heart of the city, and who worshipped Hanumanji in various ways with many incantations; and made his pupils of which he had many, to whom he taught Sanscrit, do the same. He pestered the monkey-god for many years; finally, the long-tailed one, in utter desperation, stood himself before the priest and said: 'Ask the boon you want, and enough of your incantations! I wish to be in peace.'

"The priest, with folded hands, said: 'O great lord of the black-faced hosts! Give to me the boon of turning anyone into any form I wish.'

"Hanumanji replied: 'Be it so! But beware of tampering, unduly, with another's fate lest trouble befall you!'

"Thus saying, Hanumanji presented that priest with a

large ball of coloured thread and said : ‘ On whom you will tie this thread, that person will be forced to assume at midnight the shape you desire ; when the thread is finished the boon is over. If you pester me a second time, my hosts will kill you.’

“ Hanumanji then disappeared, leaving the glittering ball of thread with the priest who preserved it most carefully in the innermost shrine of the temple, having cut off a small piece. This he tied on a stray dog just passing in the courtyard, and chased it out, and, when out of sight of everyone, wished it might become a parrot.

“ The dog, giving a frightened squawk, flew away. The delighted priest knew, then, that Hanumanji had, indeed, given him a great boon.

“ The priest turned several people who came to worship the idol into the things they most resembled, and the courtyard was soon full of peacocks, rats, snakes, asses and goats, to the bewilderment of the pupils who drove them out.

“ Now the king had a most beautiful daughter, whose beauty, my dear, was in the world of mortals only second to yours ; and a desire to ravish this fair maid with the help of the boon of Hanumanji came into the priest’s evil mind. The wretch grew thin in his attempts to find out a plan ; but one day he succeeded in thinking out a project. He tied a piece of thread on his own wrist, and turning himself into a parrot flew into the palace, and sat on the window of the room in the inner court where the princess was seated. He did this every day ; till, the princess, noticing him at last, and seeing that he was very tame, gave him a biscuit to eat. The parrot then began to speak : ‘ Great and beautiful princess ! Know that I am no ordinary parrot, but an *apsaras* from one of the heavens, placed in this body by a curse which only you can remove.’ The princess was very surprised to hear the parrot speak in

this way : ‘ Tell me,’ she asked, ‘ in what way I can help you ? ’

“ The parrot said : ‘ There is a priest in this city who is well-versed in spells so potent that, if you sent for him, he would surely devise means by which I might be free.’ ”

“ Thus speaking, the parrot flew away, leaving the princess in deep thought. She decided to send for the priest immediately, and, taking the consent of her parents, waited for his arrival in an outer-room hung with chicks of *cus-cus*. The priest, duly receiving the message of the princess, began to be very pleased with himself, believing that, now, his evil wish would shortly be fulfilled.

“ So, taking with him some of Hanumanji’s thread, he arrived in due course at the palace ; and the princess watched him come through her latticed windows. A maid-servant, on her behalf, gave him the information, which he already knew, about the parrot ; and the priest was asked to inform the princess by what means the unhappy *apsaras* could resume her own form. The priest replied : ‘ Great lady ! I see you are to be the cause of much joy and happiness ; and that it will be through you alone that an unhappy creature will attain satisfaction. I shall willingly recite the necessary charms, with your help, and this piece of coloured thread dedicated to Hanumanji. Please tie it on your arm at sunset.

“ ‘ The parrot, seeing the thread, will come to you almost immediately. After that, hide yourself, informing your servants you will not be visible to any of them till morning ; but bid them bring the parrot to me ; when, by my incantations, I shall soon restore her to her original form.’ ”

“ Thus saying, the priest, bowing deeply, handed over an exceptionally long piece of thread to the princess’ servants who duly gave it to the princess.

“ The princess took it thoughtfully : she was a very

discreet and intelligent girl, and she realised very quickly that this brilliant thread was very similar to another piece she had seen in the morning, tied round the leg of the parrot. She examined the thread carefully, turning it over and over in her hand, and wondering very much what part that coloured thread was to play in the coming drama. She was very loath to tie the thread on her arm, because this constituted a bond between her and the priest : indeed, the very tying of the thread made her his sister.¹ There was something in the bearing of that Brahmin priest which had offended the pure-minded princess, though the manner was, outwardly, all that could be desired—respectful, even deferential : moreover, his voice had not that musical quality which belongs essentially to the great-minded and chaste. The princess decided to set afoot discreet enquiries as regards the priest ; and the news came back to her, long before sunset, that he had several pupils learning magic from him. All were believed to have taken the vow of chastity, as this was imperative in the working of magic. There was, till lately, nothing against the priest whatsoever. He was counted a good and learned man, well-versed in spells. But, lately, several people, visiting the priest, had disappeared entirely, and none knew where they had gone to—certainly they were not in the temple.

“Hearing this last, the princess was more than ever convinced that she should not have taken the thread from the Brahmin ; for, it is said, too, in the holy books, that it is unwise to accept even the smallest of gifts from a stranger. So the princess remained in deep thought till the golden sun, turning red in the heavens, began to sink rapidly below the horizon.

✓ ¹ The Rakhni, an old Rajput custom. The thread once tied, the man and woman were brother and sister for ever.

“Now, attached to the palace there was a large menagerie of wild animals which the king, her father, kept for some purpose, the nature of which was not, exactly, known to himself or to anyone else, but because it was the fashion of the time.

“The princess, taking into her confidence one of the cleverest of her attendants, cut off a piece of the thread, and bade her maid take it to the keeper of the animals, and tie it round the leg of the fiercest of the animals there, and then remain watching till morning. It was no easy matter to tie the thread on the animal indicated—a large she-wolf, freshly captured—but it was done at last; and the maid remained with the attendant till some hours after sun-set when the she-wolf suddenly disappeared, and in her place there stood a very small green parrot. The maid-servant was loath to pick this parrot-cum-wolf up, but on her mistress’s bidding she placed the parrot in a cage, and took it to the priest with no word except that she had found it, as he had described, in the palace grounds. That evil priest seeing the parrot, and with no suspicion that he had been foiled of his purpose, was filled with delight, and placed the cage containing the parrot in the innermost shrine of the temple.

“He, then, bade his pupils make a cordon round the temple, and beat drums till midnight. He told them that as he was about to recite powerful incantations, and release powerful forces, they must not be alarmed if they heard any screams or calls for help; on no account were they to open the door of the innermost room till morning, but continue beating the drums till the cries ceased.

“Then the priest having perfumed himself with incense, and oil of jasmine, made himself ready like a bridegroom, believing that his bride would be quite helpless against his strength. He was in a happy mood as he took the

parrot from the cage, and sprinkling the parrot with water bade it return to its original form. Instantaneously, a fierce and furious wolf sprang to life, and began tearing that unfortunate wretch to pieces. In vain did he cry for help to his pupils who remembering their guru's injunctions, went on beating their drums with trembling fingers, until all sounds, except a peculiar growling, died down. This growling continued all day till the following evening, when the pupils opened the door, and found a wolf eating the body of the priest. Armed with sticks they drove it into the jungle; and believing that the demon that their *guru* had wished to subjugate had proved stronger than him and had ruined him, they gave up their muttering of charms, and each went to his respective home; and decided, from that day onwards, to follow other and less dangerous avocations.

“The princess kept her own counsel.”

Mahadeva, in conclusion, said: “Therefore, O daughter of the mountains, be convinced by these two tales that unfitting gifts bring trouble; sometimes to the giver, sometimes to the receiver, and sometimes to both.”

Thus convincing the kind-hearted lady of the mountains, the great lord flew back with her, in his arms, to sit on the topmost summit of the Himalayas, and watch the world beneath them fade away, till both fell into meditation.

VI

AN OLD DEBT

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IN the city of Junagadh, in olden days, there lived a very rich merchant who was served long and faithfully by an only servant who did everything possible for his master's welfare.

He rose at dawn; scrubbed the floors of the large house; cleaned the vessels of the Seth¹ and his wife, till they shone like gold; milked the cattle; set the milk for churning, even churned the milk in a large brass pot which he held fast between his feet, whilst he pulled, with his hands, the ropes that swung the long wooden churn. This finished, he prepared the breakfast; cleaned up all vessels and trays used; ate the leavings; prepared the midday meal, cleaned up again; then had a few hours' sleep till tea-time and the evening meal. His master gave him over and above the remains of the food a small wage; and as the servant was thrifty, he found that after his twenty-five years of service he had managed to save out of his meagre earnings a sum of four hundred pieces of silver.

These four hundred pieces of silver the servant took to the goldsmith, and asked him to give him gold of the same value, and to turn this gold into a little idol which the servant kept in a little tin box, and duly venerated.

At that time, he conceived the idea of taking a well-earned holiday, and making a pilgrimage to Dwarka.

He waited a few more years to collect a little more money for the expenses of the journey, then approached his master for the necessary leave. The master after vainly trying

¹ Merchant.

to dissuade his servant, from purely selfish purposes of his own, agreed finally to let him go ; and the servant, gathering his poor belongings into a little bundle, prepared for his long journey on foot. As he feared thieves, he decided to leave his little tin-box containing the gold idol in safe custody with his master.

The servant carefully secured the box that contained his life's savings with strong string, and handing it over to that master, requested him to keep it safely as it contained an object of veneration. This done, the servant set out on his pilgrimage.

The merchant had readily agreed to keep the box of his servant in his safe, thinking it a hostage for his return ; when taking the little tin box, he was very surprised to discover how heavy it was ; but, at that time, he kept his own counsel.

The servant now set out for the pilgrimage with just sufficient money to enable him to have one meal a day ; and taking with him the customary offerings for the god of the temple, which consisted of three very large hard cakes of sweetened flour, and a large quantity of brown sugar, went on and on, sleeping at nights under trees, till one-third of the journey was well-nigh over. At a mean rest-house, he came across an old man, the solitary inmate, dying of starvation. The servant, seeing his sad plight, decided to part with one of the cakes and the third part of the brown sugar which he had in his bundle. The old man ate of both ravenously, and gathering strength blessed him, saying he would now be able to return to his village, a few miles distant, which he had left a few days before. Thieves, he told the servant, had fallen upon him and deprived him of all his food, and but for the advent of the servant, he must surely have died in that rest-house.

The servant continued his journey.

Days passed, one after the other ; sometimes he came upon other pilgrims, more often he trudged on alone, tired, hungry, but happy at the thought of the religious merit accruing to him, when he should make his little offering at the temple.

Sometimes, when he had earned sufficient to buy for himself a proper meal, he walked as many as thirty miles a day ; sometimes he was given a lift in bullock carts ; but mostly he walked and was too weak and tired to do more than ten miles.

He rarely had a good meal, and was always hungry ; but nothing would induce him, however hungry he might be, to eat of the two large sweet cakes or the brown sugar which he had with him, and which he had brought as a special offering to the temple.

After many months he came near the coast, and caught sight of the glittering dome of the temple in the distance. His little stock of money had now completely given out, and he would have to wait on the mainland to earn sufficient from the rich pilgrims at the rest-house, to pay for the hire of a boat to take him across the sea.

In the rest-house were gathered a number of people who were listening to the tales of a wandering troubadour.

This one was about the temple at Dwarka, and why it faced the West when, as everyone knew, Hindu temples always faced the East.¹

"Once upon a time," said the Bharot,² "the temple faced East. It was, then, in the possession of a very arrogant priest ; and, at that time, too, in the city of Dwarka, there lived a man of the untouchable caste whose devotion

¹ It is believed—I say it with reluctance, for I fear to offend my Hindu friends—that the Dwarka temple is a converted mosque.

² Wandering poet—troubadour

to the lord of the temple was so great that unless he had sight of him he would neither eat nor drink.

“He spent his days and nights in contemplation of this divinity, and his devotion was evident to everyone; for he perpetually hung about the temple, waiting eagerly for its doors to be opened, and this, not by reason of his vow alone, but because he was genuinely devoted to Shri Krishna.¹ His glimpses of the lord of the temple were from a great distance; for, being a low-caste man, he was not allowed to come even as far as the shadow of the temple.

“Yet, that arrogant priest begrudged him even that glimpse, believing that the glance, alone, even from a distance, of a low-caste man took away from the magnetism that the lord of the temple dispensed to the favoured.

“So, whenever the priest saw the low-caste man near the temple, he grew exceedingly annoyed, chasing him away with the pelting of stones; and one day, finding him a little closer than usual, he ordered the low-caste servants of the temple’s outer courtyard to beat him thoroughly. This, they did, and left him well-nigh dead at the back of the temple, threatening that if he ever came to the front of the temple again, however far he might stand, much worse things would happen to him than a mere beating.

“So the poor untouchable lay there, weeping bitterly and aching all over; but unwilling to break his vow, and determined to die there, hoping in some birth or other to be born in a caste worthy of worshipping in the temple. For that poor man did not mind the beating, nor did he mind starving; but he minded not being able to see the face of the idol in the temple, believing—poor fellow—that in this sight alone lay his redemption.

¹ The deity of the Dwarka temple—Another name of Krishna is Dwarkanath: lit. lord of Dwarka.

“But the Great God of mankind, who, alone, can read the hearts of man rightly, saw that this devotional pariah was as much in love with God in his real form as any of those who worshipped him only as an idol of stone; and great compassion came to Him; and to the surprise of everyone, especially to that arrogant priest, the temple at Dwarka swung slowly round and faced the man of the untouchable caste as he knelt at his prayers; and the great door being open he gazed with delight into the very eyes of the smiling idol who seemed to bid him be happy; for even greater knowledge than this was to be his in some future birth.”

The servant, listening to this story, was deeply thrilled, he, too, looking eagerly forward to his visit on the morrow, to the wonderful temple; he, too, praying for God's favour to a poor man.

He felt in his little bundle, and ascertained, rightly, that his two sweet cakes and the brown sugar, acquired and kept with so much difficulty, were intact. The priests of that time were in no way different to the arrogant priest of the bard's story; and all knew that without offerings of a sort, none would be permitted to enter the temple.¹ Just then, the servant saw a very old woman limping along, who came up to him crying out for alms: “O Son! I am suffering for want of food.”

The servant replied: “Alas, Mother! I have not even sufficient money with me to pay for my entrance into the temple, for which I have travelled hundreds of miles; nor have I hire for the boat, let alone money for food. I have also to work my way back to my home in Junagadh. Beg, old mother, from someone richer than me.”

¹ This is true even to to-day; the poorest man pays a tax to the Gaekwar of Baroda for entering Dwarka, and several taxes to the priests. Re. 1-4-0 to bathe in the sacred pool, and a similar sum for the privilege of being branded, and other sums, in other ways, too many to enumerate here.

"At least," she said, "give me something to eat, for I am at my last breath. O Son! If you do not give me anything to eat I must lie here and die; for I cannot walk a step further without food."

The servant, looking into her wan face, saw that what she had said was true, and feeling great pity for her, he opened out his little bundle and took from within a second portion of the brown sugar and one of the cakes, which he handed to her, keeping one cake and the rest of the brown sugar for the offering at the temple.

The old woman ate ravenously, blessed him, and limped on in the direction of the rest-house.

But hardly had the servant gone a few steps further, when a very pitiful whimpering from an adjoining thicket assailed his ears. Looking in the thicket, he saw, lying in a concealed place, an emaciated bitch which had just given birth to several pups who were trying, in vain, to suck some milk from their exhausted mother whose fast-glazing eyes showed, plainly, that unless food were given to her, and that, too, very quickly, her very next breath might easily prove her last. The kind-hearted servant could not bear this pitiful sight. He opened his bundle, and taking out the last cake and the brown sugar, put it before the poor creature who greedily ate of it, and, life returning slowly to her, the pups began to stop their whimpering, and suck some little milk.

The servant had, now, given up all idea of going to the temple, and decided to return to his home in Junagadh. But a certain rich man, coming up to him just then, called out to him hastily, and placing a large basket of coco-nuts before him bade him place them on his behalf in the temple, giving him, at the same time, three pieces of gold for himself. Ramchandra, in great elation, first bought more bread and milk for the bitch; then, hiring a boat, took

carefully the merchant's coco-nuts, and reached the temple in due course, when there was some unusual excitement ; and on enquiring the cause of this excitement, he was told that a voice had come from the idol in the temple.

"Tell Ramchandra," said the voice, "that I have received his three cakes, and his three portions of brown sugar, and they are the sweetest offerings I have had for a long while." And Ramchandra—for that was the name of the poor servant—fell on his knees, and tears dropped from his eyes in a very ecstasy of joy.

After some time, Ramchandra set his face homewards ; and after about six months came in sight of his native town ; but he was very wearied and fell ill very shortly afterwards, and died, telling his brother who had a wife and a large family and who had grown very poor, of the sum of money he had earned, and the manner in which he had kept it with his master. The brother was to take the little idol of gold from that master, and convert it, a little at a time, into the coin of the realm, and live happily, and spend his life in doing good works for the repose of his own and his brother's soul.

So, after the funeral ceremonies were over, the brother of Ramchandra presented himself before the merchant, and telling him of his brother's wish, asked for the little tin box. But that master feigned ignorance of the matter, denying that he had any box of his brother's, then, finally pretending to remember, gave him the little tin box. So the brother of Ramchandra carried it happily to his mean little house in the bazaar.

Now, it had so happened that, in the absence of Ramchandra, his master, curious at the heaviness of the box, had opened it to examine its contents.

He was very surprised to discover that, out of the meagre

earnings of twenty-five years, his servant had, yet, managed to save sufficient money to buy an idol of gold.

At that time there was being performed the "Nikka"¹ ceremony of the marriage of the princess of Junagadh ; and as many vessels, much jewellery, heavy anklets, bangles and boxes were to be made of gold, and as gold *mohurs* were to be placed in their tens of thousands on trays for the dowry, the price of gold went up, and the merchant's cupidity getting the better of him, he decided to sell the idol of gold for double the price which the servant had paid for it, meaning, however, to pay him back, later, the original sum. When his servant died, the merchant had thought himself relieved of all further responsibility, and the brother's visit appeared to this unseemly merchant almost as an unjust one.

Now, when the brother of Ramchandra opened the tin box, he discovered that there was no gold idol in it at all, but only a piece of lead, and seeing this piece of lead, he gave a great cry and fell unconscious.

Later on, gaining strength to get up, he went straight to the merchant to ask from him the idol of gold which his brother had assured him was in the tin box in the merchant's possession ; but the miserly merchant persisted in denying all knowledge of the idol.

"Your brother have an idol of gold !" scoffed the merchant for the benefit of the crowd now collected round the place, reiterating that he had given him back the tin box which was all his brother had left with the merchant.

The merchant then ordered his servants to turn the man out into the street. Then, that brother of Ramchandra fixing large and melancholy eyes on the merchant said : "My brother was a good servant to you and had served

¹ This is a Mahomedan form of marriage ; the bride is not present. The Kazi ascertains her wishes and the marriage proceeds.

you for twenty-five years : it was his wish that I should be benefited after his death by this gift. You have much money, O Seth ! and there was no need for you to have deprived me and my poor family of this sum which would have kept us in happiness for the rest of our lives, and was our just due. I am unlike my brother in this matter. He might have forgiven you ; but I cannot. I shall take revenge on you, and very speedily, too, and in a way which you will not suspect ; for know, O merchant, no one can cheat another and think to escape the consequences of his evil act ! Yes, yes," muttered the distracted brother, " the lords of karma must needs help me in my plan."

Thus saying, the brother of Ramchandra returned to his home, and lay on his mean pallet ; and a raging fever descended upon him, and he could neither eat nor drink, and in a few days his spirit left his unhappy body.

Now, at this time, the merchant was about fifty years of age and as yet he had no heir ; he was a man of vast possessions, and it was his great desire, even anxiety, that he should have a son, not only to inherit his vast property, but to perform the necessary religious rites for him when he should come to die. His one prayer to the gods of the temple was that they should give him a son. To this purpose he made many rich offerings to the Brahmins, and to the temple, and fed a thousand cows daily for many months. He then married a young wife. After a year, the young wife presented him with a remarkably beautiful son, and that merchant grew very proud. Though, at the time of the death of Ramchandra's brother, he had felt some qualms of conscience, these completely left him when he saw how favoured he had become of the gods.

His son grew up ; he was a very clever and gifted boy who spoke very little ; but wherever he went he made a

great impression upon everyone by his intelligence, his beauty and the calm dignity of his manner.

He lost his mother at a very early age, and was brought up by the sister of the merchant—a widow who, like the merchant, doted on the boy.

When he was about seventeen, the father and aunt determined to have him married, and a girl of their caste was selected, and arrangements were made for an early marriage: this took place in due course.

The merchant had now grown very old.

He could only be completely happy, he felt, if he might see the face of his grandchild; for that son of his was dearer to the merchant than all his great possessions put together, dearer to him than life itself.

But, shortly after the marriage, to the concern of everyone, the son fell seriously ill.

The doctors of the town were called, and they pronounced it to be a malignant fever.

The old merchant was frantic with grief; prayers were recited in the temples for the boy's recovery; alms were distributed; the poor were given clothes; and the Brahmins and cows were fed in their hundreds.

As the days passed, it was seen by all that no earthly means could avail to save the merchant's son; the boy was visibly fading away. The old merchant tended him night and day, and it was only with difficulty he could be persuaded to leave the sick room for the necessities of life.

One day, the son, rallying himself a little, asked the remaining people in his chamber—of whom there were many, coming in from time to time—to go outside, as he had something for his father's ear alone.

They obeyed him, but hovered about wondering; and those who were listening close by, heard the young boy say in a solemn voice to his father: "Good sir! Do you

know who I am?" and the father replied sadly, believing his son's wits were wandering in a last delirium: "You are my very son."

The boy laughed, loud enough to be heard by those outside, and said: "Yes, but I am also the brother of Ramchandra, whose idol of gold you stole: now, go quickly and bring that idol and send it to the house of Ramchandra's brother; otherwise, not only am I leaving you, but for the interest on the money you have taken wrongfully from that poor family, you shall have to maintain your daughter-in-law, for she is very young."

"Moreover, a widow, according to the rules of our caste, cannot re-marry, and she will live long, and will remain in your house a living stigma of your wrong-doing."

The merchant grew pale as death; but as he knew many people were listening outside, and, amongst them, several who remembered the controversy of twenty years ago, said, for their benefit: "Oh, my son! What are you talking? Has someone been gossiping to you or telling you stories? Who is Ramchandra? What has he to do with you and me? Ramchandra died many years ago, long before your birth and I paid him well for his services. What are you talking of?"

The boy repeated: "I had come to harass your heart, your mean heart, in the only way it could be harassed; and I was granted my wish by the lords of karma. But, as your son, I would wish to stay on—if my fate would allow it; for, as my father, I see you in a kinder light, and I have learnt to love you, and I love my dear wife. I once more implore you to give back to the family of Ramchandra his idol of gold."

The boy's voice rose to a shriek, and the terrified people, outside the room, trembled in very fear: some knowing, some wondering, what it all meant.

But the merchant persisted in his denial of ever receiving an idol of gold from Ramchandra or anyone, and the young boy, sighing deeply said: "It is fate, and one cannot alter it. If you had paid back your debt, the lords of karma would have let me stay, but they know too well your obduracy, and I, by my vindictive wish, had not gained sufficient merit to be master of all your vast possessions"; and turning on his side, the boy died.

Then the merchant fell flat on the ground in an agony of grief, begging his son to return, offering to give to the family of Ramchandra a thousand idols of gold; but fate is stronger than everything, for it is made up of man's own actions which bind him inexorably.

Then there was much lamentation and the women beat their breasts; but the merchant lay unconscious for some time, and when he regained consciousness, they found that he was paralysed; and though he tried vainly to tell them to go to the house of Ramchandra's brother and give them an idol of gold, speech was denied to him for ever.

VII

A POT OF MILK

VII. A POT OF MILK

IN a certain jungle, far from the haunts of man, in the hollow of an old peepul tree, there lived a withered old hermit : and, in the same hollow, there lived with him a very large snake who was probably as old as the tree itself. At any rate the snake had now grown quite blind with age, and on its upper lip—further proof, in a snake, of great age—long hairs stood out like moustaches. It was of the harmless variety of snakes, but, even had it wanted to bite anyone, there was not a single tooth left in its head.

It lived by drinking what was left of a pot of milk which the people of the village placed every evening at the foot of the tree. In the beginning, these people were aware that a hermit lived in the hollow in the peepul tree, and were aware, also, that he shared his habitation with a snake. This last brought him added veneration, not unmixed with awe. Many of the Bhils from the surrounding villages came to see this strange phenomena, and believed, with all their hearts, that they gained much virtue by the mere sight of the holy couple.

Now, it so happened, that, one day, the old hermit fell seriously ill, and was unable to drink his milk.

The snake, even had it full powers of perception, which it had not, was, by nature, after all, a snake, a creature of cold blood, to whom the miserable condition of its companion mattered nothing.

If the snake thought at all, it was with some pleasurable sensation that, for some reason or other, he had more milk to drink than he had had hitherto.

In the course of time, the hermit died : and his body lay rotting in the hollow of the old peepul tree ; but the milk was placed at the foot of the tree as usual, and the snake drank it regularly, slithering down from the hollow, and then returning by the aid of the rough surfaces to its home in the peepul tree.

Now, one day, it came to pass that the Raja of an adjacent town, passing that way, and hearing that there was an old ascetic in the jungle who subsisted only on a small pot of milk which he shared with a companion, and that companion, a large snake with bristling moustaches, became very curious to see this phenomena for himself, and have the *darshana* of this queer hermit who had chosen for himself so strange a companion.

The Raja determined to encamp near the foot of the old peepul tree ; and the snake, realising by the unusual vibrations of his spinal-column, that there was some tremendous noise going on, coiled himself under the dead hermit, and decided to remain hidden for some days.

The king waited many days and nights in the hope of seeing the hermit, and, though, he, after a while, occasionally saw the snake who was forced, through hunger, to descend to drink his milk, there was no sight of the old hermit.

The king decided, finally, to look into the hollow, and see what had happened to the old hermit, and thus they discovered the disintegrating corpse of the hermit.

The first idea, that came to the minds of most of them, was that the snake had bitten and, therefore, killed his unfortunate companion ; but, fortunately for the snake, there were wiser men in the camp who pointed out the improbability of the snake biting the hermit at the end of their long years of companionship, and the greater possibility of the hermit having died a natural death.

The king gave orders that the ascetic should be buried at the foot of the tree ; and the milk be continued to be placed there as usual for the snake.

Years and years passed by, and the habit of placing the milk, at the foot of the peepul tree, continued.

The snake, too, died ; and, now, the milk lay untasted at the foot of the old tree ; but, for the people of that village, there had grown up a tradition around the peepul tree.

It was, they whispered, inhabited by some holy or unholy thing, and it would be dangerous to stop the offering ; so the milk continued to be placed there, irrespective of whether it were drunk or not.

Now, a rascally thief of that village who was nearly always hungry, decided to drink that pot of milk every evening, and chance the anger of whatever tree-god inhabited the place. The thief came to the old peepul tree when no one was about, and drank the fresh milk ; and the people of the village, seeing the empty pot, were highly gratified that the denizen of the tree had, at last, deigned to accept of their offering ; so they increased the supply which the thief duly drank, smiling inwardly at their credulity.

One day, it so happened that, a very old hermit coming that way and seeing the large, comfortable-looking hollow in the peepul tree, decided to take up his abode there. At dusk, he was greatly delighted to see that the gods had placed for him a pot of sweet, new milk which he drank eagerly and with deep satisfaction, for he was both hungry and thirsty ; then re-climbing into the hollow he settled himself comfortably for the night.

He was suddenly awakened by an unusual sound, and looking down he saw a still more unusual sight—a wild-looking figure dancing round the empty pot with every appearance of rage.

The hermit, wondering who this strange creature was, and the cause of his anger and disappointment, decided that this must be the ruling *pishasch*¹ of the tree.

It was not without trepidation that he realised that he must have drunk the creature's offering.

But the hermit saw that, after vain expostulations to no one in particular, the creature went away after a while; and the hermit, realising that no harm had befallen him after all, decided that his own supernatural powers—*siddhi*—must be greater than those of this devil; and a project, born of greed, came into his heart.

He had heard from many quarters that the pig-tail (*chothli*) of a devil gave to the possessor of that lock the dominion of the three worlds²: and to obtain this dominion of the three worlds became the sole aim, from now onwards, of the old hermit, especially as—so it appeared to him—a devil, with limited powers, had been specially provided for him by a benign providence.

The hermit decided, therefore, to recite, with all the earnestness at his command, the incantations necessary for the subjugation of devils, by the power of which he hoped, in due course, to be able to pluck from the back of the head of the devil the coveted pig-tail.

The next day, the pot of milk was placed, as usual, at the foot of the tree; but, the hermit, descending quietly, drank but a little of it, hardly sufficient to keep body and soul together, and left the rest for the devil.

The thief, who had come again for his share of the milk, was, this time, delighted to find that some had been left for him, and drank of it gratefully. The hermit noting his pleasure, continued, assiduously, with his incantations, contenting himself with drinking less than half

¹ Pishasch—devil.

² This is a very old and well-believed superstition in India.

of the milk, leaving the rest for the one whose pig-tail he coveted.

This went on for many weeks : for the hermit was, according to his lore, waiting for a propitious day for the carrying out of his purpose. The day came : it was the last day of the darkest half of the lunar month.¹

The thief, in the meantime, though he had noticed that part of the milk was drunk every night, did not mind this : he was assured that some supernatural being drank it, and he was proud to be partaker of the leavings of that spirit, hoping thereby to get some of his merit.

For is it not written in the *Shastra*² that even Indra, the king of gods, loses part of his merit to the one who partakes of his leavings ?

Later, the thief decided to watch and see what kind of spirit in the tree drank the milk.

With this object in view the thief came earlier one evening, and hid himself in the thicket, about the time the villagers were in the habit of placing the pot of milk at the foot of the tree. After a while, he saw a strange creature, covered with hair, come out of the hollow in the tree, and drink half of the milk.

Now, the thief was assured that there was, indeed, a spirit who lived in the tree, and the thief became extremely happy at the thought that he, alone, had been favoured with the sight of him ; and, for the gaining of more merit, he determined to propitiate that spirit : so he spent the night looking up eagerly at the hollow, and decided no longer to rob the spirit of his milk.

The hermit, highly elated, noticing that the devil no longer drank his milk, put this down to his complete

¹ This, in India, is a great day for black magic : the full-moon day being the one for white magic.

² Holy writ of India.

vanquishment, and waited anxiously for the culmination of his spells on the next darkest night of the month.

That day, the hermit saw the thief standing close to the tree looking, as was his wont, eagerly up at the hollow in the tree.

The thief, seeing that hermit, said, clasping his hands, humbly : " Lord of the tree ! I have lived a very evil life and I, now, bitterly repent of it. I crave your blessings. I promise you I shall never return to my evil ways. For many days I have robbed you of your milk ; and for this, too, I crave your forgiveness. I shall now strive to live a better life."

The hermit, highly elated at hearing these meek words from the thief, was, now, completely assured that not only was the devil absolutely under his control, but the hermit had actually been instrumental in making him repent of his evil ways.

For a while, he tarried with the thought of leaving the matter thus, and forfeiting the right of the beloved pig-tail, but avarice won.

The hermit said : " Come nearer, that I may lay my hands on your head, and give you freely of my blessings."

The thief was very grateful, and taking off his turban¹ drew nearer with his bared head for the blessings of the hermit who, bending down, adroitly twisted out a lock of hair from the back of the thief's head who, scared out of his life at this strange behaviour on the part of the spirit of the tree, took himself off as fast as his legs could carry him to the village, vowing, as he went, to every god in the heavens, that he was sorry for his sins, and imploring them to save him from the anger of the spirit in the tree, whose milk he had drunk.

The hermit—in great pride that he had secured, so easily,

¹ The usual respectful method when receiving blessings from a holy man.

the coveted pig-tail of the devil—tied his prize carefully in a corner of his loin-cloth, and believing himself, now, to have power over the three worlds, left the place.

Now, it so happened that two dwellers of the air, passing that way, and witnessing the last scene of all, were astonished at the follies and expectations of these two mortals.

In mystical introspection, wondering at this peculiar useless and absurd link between the hermit and the thief, they saw the past: the hermit was the very same as the one that had first lived in the hollow of this very tree, and the thief was none other than an old companion—the snake.

The hermit had died in the thought that he was a hermit, and, so, he was re-born, still a hermit: but the snake had died with one insatiable desire in his head: the pot of milk at the bottom of the peepul tree. So, urged by this vivid desire—though he knew it not—fate had brought him in the quickest form she could devise to gain for him again his coveted pot of milk, and those two old companions of the past birth had, once more, shared the pot of milk which destiny had allotted to them from time immemorial.

“How long,” said the younger of the two sadly, “will they continue to desire and so share that pot of milk?”

The other replied: “Till greed shall die out from both of their breasts, and there appears little likelihood at present.

“And thousands of years hence,” went on the elder gravely, “we shall see in the same jungle, in the hollow of this or a similar tree, the old hermit again, and the old blind snake with long moustaches.”

The younger asked with deepened sadness: “Why?”

The elder replied: “These two are of the kind that take

one step forward in evolution, and two steps backward, and achieve nothing in thousands of births ; for neither of them have any interest in anything outside themselves, and their own immediate wants ; and they will remain thus till some impetus change their course."

The younger asked : " What sort of impetus is possible for people like these ? " Then the elder, reading the future, said smilingly : " In a certain village, close to this jungle, there is a man and a woman as indifferent to interests outside themselves as this couple, and they have just given an extra water-pot to an old hermit : and, whilst that act, like all unnecessary acts, was a mistake, for it linked the giver with one whom it would have been better to part with for ever, who shall quarrel with Fate when you hear the sequel ? For that water-pot, and that alone, is to play a great part in the lives of this hermit and thief, when they shall be back in their rôles of snake and hermit.

VIII

THE WATER POT

VIII. THE WATER POT

IN the deep of a forest, under a banyan tree, a certain old hermit had built for himself a little hut with a grass-covered roof, in front of which there was a little platform. It was the habit of this hermit to sit on this platform every evening, and go into a trance. One evening, whilst he was thus occupied, a pair of young lovers came there, eager to see him, and obtain from him some instruction. But on seeing that the hermit was in a trance, the man said to his friend: "Let us go away. I have some premonition of evil. Moreover, it is not good to disturb a holy man in his meditation."

But the young woman replied in the negative: "Let us examine him carefully," she said. "I have never seen a holy man at such close quarters before."

Thus saying, she tip-toed up to the hermit, and, putting her face near to that of the hermit, peered into his half-closed eyes.

Her lover said hastily: "I do not like this at all: it would be better if we go away. Had it been in our lot to receive any favour from this holy man, he must surely have been awake and ready for us. Have you not read in the books of wisdom that evil befalls those who force matters with a king, a *rishi*¹ or a woman?"

The young woman replied with laughter in her voice: "Am I not a woman? Are you not forcing matters where I am concerned by not agreeing with me, and wanting me to go away when I wish to stay?"

¹ A sage.
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The man replied : " Speak gently, lest the hermit be disturbed and, waking, curse us."

But that foolish woman, heeding nothing but her own whim, persisted in hovering round the hermit, examining him curiously all the while, first from one angle, then from another.

In the course of her flittings, her foot came accidentally against a water-pot that lay between the platform and the hut, and, by force of the impact, the pot broke. The report brought the hermit out of his trance, and he called out in a deep and hollow voice : " Who is there ? "

The two lovers stood transfixed with fear : whilst the hermit continued in louder and harsher tones : " Oh ! ill-omened ones, for I know you both ! Have you come again to disturb me in my desire for peace ? "

The *rishi* said : " You have been the cause of much unhappiness to me, and try to escape you both as I may, you still pursue me relentlessly."

The man said : " Great hermit ! We see you to-day for the first time. We have, indeed, offended you by breaking your water-pot, but, by sun-set, I shall return and bring you a new and better water-pot."

The hermit sighed and said : " By sun-set, you will both be dead."

The woman on hearing this sprang forth excitedly, and said : " Surely you jest ; for holiness is just, and no holy man would find justice in the taking of the life of us both for that of a water-pot, and I, alone, am guilty, yet to take my life would still have been unjust ; but spare the life of my lover who was unwilling for me to do the act which has brought about the disaster of your curse, and let me die."

The hermit said : " It is not I that curse you, poor woman ! It is never necessary for the wise to punish the

ignorant : for ignorance is itself sufficient punishment. Yet, had your lover been punished for a rash act committed by you in his presence, it would not be unjust : for man has wisdom of his own, and should not follow the dicta of woman against his conscience. He knew that your act was unnecessary, and an unnecessary act is a prelude to evil. You have, in your ignorance, connected your coming death with the destruction of my water-pot when, in reality, there is no connection at all between the two acts. Both of you were destined to die when you met me again."

"Lord," said these two poor people, "we insist we have never met you before."

But the hermit went on : "And, yet again, no man can be sure that he will live till sun-set, for the life of man is as uncertain as the life of that unhappy water-pot which has witnessed the storms, and thunders, and lightnings of many years, and might just as easily have withstood them, and have continued its existence for as many more, but for the whim of a foolish woman. Go, now, and prepare yourselves : for, know, poor woman, you are destined to die at the hands of this man, your lover ; and he, afterwards, by his own hand : for, seeds sown in a past birth ripen to a fruition, and I have told you that meeting with me again has brought the fruit to quick ripening."

The man said pitifully : "Revered *rishi* ! I do not remember meeting you before. But, tell us what sin we have committed in the past birth that this fate is about to fall upon us, and is there no way of repentance by which we can avert our fate ?"

The hermit, sighing again, replied : "I think not, but pray to the gods. Know man, that, years ago, in this very jungle, under this self-same tree, there lived a hermit and his wife : both of them were vowed to perpetual chas-

tity. They were not young, but neither were they old; and their vow was an unnecessary one, as unnecessary as the act which broke my water-pot.

“One day, it chanced that there came that way a young man and his wife of the caste of wood-cutters : they had gone into the jungle to seek for honey, and were returning after burning down several bee-hives, with their large copper vessel full of honey-combs. Both stood at a little distance from the hermit’s hut watching the old hermit and his wife at their devotions ; and into the heart of the wife of the wood-cutter, came a wicked desire.

“She said roguishly to her husband : ‘ Let us have a jest with this couple : I shall try and seduce the old man from his devotions ; and, do you try to seduce the old woman, and, if we fail they will accumulate much merit, and if we succeed, I shall gain the supernatural powers of the hermit, and be useful to you.’

“So they both retired a little to one side to make themselves presentable ; they washed in a little stream that ran by the side of the hermit’s hut, and whilst the woman bound *champak* flowers in her hair, the man turned up the ends of his moustache ; then, both going before the hermit and his wife, they bowed low, arms folded on their breasts, saying that having heard of the piety of these two holy people, they had taken a vow to serve them for one year : they, then, placed before the holy couple their pot of honey as an offering, and craved permission to remain with them, and fulfil their vow.

“There was no need for either the hermit or his wife to have these servants, for their wants were small. Besides, they knew well the dictum that one should not accept strangers without testing their credentials to the full. But fate is stronger than the wisdom of the slender of intellect, and that foolish hermit and his wife agreed finally

to keep these two strangers, and not be guilty of making them break their vow. Enquiring what relationship they bore to each other, the wood-cutter's wife replied hastily that they were brother and sister.

"So these two came to stay at the hermitage; and their behaviour was of such propriety that neither the hermit nor his wife had occasion to doubt their good faith, and the couple completely cheated the old hermit and his wife.

"The so-called brother and sister were never alone with each other, the man lived exclusively with the hermit, and the woman with the hermit's wife.

"Now, unless the flame of passion is completely extinguished, it is foolish to think of taking vows of perpetual chastity; one must try, rather, to fulfil nobly the duties that are inherent in men and women, regulating life in such a manner that the seeds of all desires may be controlled to be finally exterminated.

"To burn the seed of desire forcibly may end in the burning of oneself.

"So it came to pass, as might be expected, that the two old people in whom the flame of passion still burnt, being frustrated of each other, turned their hearts to these younger people; and, in the same way, the frustrated passion of the younger couple was forcibly turned into new channels.

"The apparent devotion of the young man to the hermit's wife, and the young woman to the hermit, commenced ostensibly for a purpose, now began to change, slowly but surely, taking on the hue of sincerity. Neither of these two young creatures had, at first, any idea of the final breaking of their own marital ties; but in their determination to seduce the old hermit and his wife from their self-imposed duty, they under-rated the danger to themselves and their own fickle emotions. Day by day, love—or rather the semblance of it—grew, and as love

begets love, these four, living a life of undue restraint—for in their pursuit of this foolish and uncalled for jest, these young people had put aside the possibility of their ever being alone together—these four began to sin in thought.

“Unlike the hermit and his wife who had, by a certain austerity and the rigour of their lives, learnt to control, to some extent, their desires, the man and woman of a lower caste, having no code of ethics to help or guide them in this new difficulty, lost all control of themselves ; and that which was begun in jest was played now in real earnest.

“The woman saw in the white-haired hermit, all the embodiments of manly virtue ; and the man, in the emaciated frame of the hermit’s wife, delicacy and grace ; in her sunken eyes, he saw, holy austerity.

“The wood-cutter and his wife thus grew more and more indifferent to each other ; and the hermit and his wife, in similar fashion, grew equally indifferent to each other, and each fixed his desire on that which, they all knew, was unlawful.

“Moreover, the hermit and his wife had found life more comfortable for them through the services of these two strong healthy people, and, in this laxity, some of their self-imposed austerity had already disappeared.

“Now, desire for the consummation of her passion drove the young wife of the wood-cutter to yet another evil thought : for, it is the law that, evil thoughts are as natural to the evil and evil thoughts to ripen, at last, into deeds, as good thoughts that ripen likewise into deeds of their kinds, are natural to the good. So, the wise, knowing the rule, do not, unduly, blame the one or praise the other.

“The wood-cutter’s wife persuaded herself into the belief that the obstacle to her illegal desire was her one-time husband, the wood-cutter alone ; without him, she reasoned,

she could easily become the hermit's second wife. In her woman's vanity, it never occurred to her that her husband, too, might have fallen in love with someone else, and that someone be, of all persons, the wife of the hermit.

"Thought rides swiftly in the air, as swift, if not swifter, than words; and, the same night, a similar thought occurred to the wood-cutter, as well: that the old hermit was no real obstacle to his corrupt desires, but his wife was the true obstacle; and if the wife died or were lost; and if he could return to the hermitage, accounting easily for her loss or death by saying that she had strayed away and a wild animal had slain her, he might be happy at last. He believed that, the death of his wife achieved, he could live on indefinitely in this hermitage and gain the favour of the hermit's wife, and live happy ever afterwards; for, now, he had acquired for her so great an infatuation that he could neither rest by night nor day.

"Now, the sinful, consciously or unconsciously, help others to the fulfilment of their sin; so, the next day, when they were all out together, the wood-cutter's wife expressed to the hermit her desire to learn about the lore of the herbs of the jungle. The hermit was only too pleased to exhibit before her all his lore, and, he was, indeed, very proficient in the respect of herbs. He pointed out to her those herbs which would best benefit mankind, illustrating that, in the vicinity of these best of all herbs, there grew, always, the most deadly ones.

"'It is believed,' he said, 'that the world was once populated, in every particular, by the harmful alone; and that the good of every class, man included, was gradually brought into being by a Beneficent Providence to act as an antidote.

"'Therefore,' he continued, 'you will notice, side by side with the deadliest of poisonous herbs, its antidote.'

"The hermit, then, showed the wood-cutter's wife several poisonous herbs side by side with those very plants that were their antidotes.

"The wood-cutter's wife, having achieved her purpose, taking her opportunity, plucked, unobserved, some of the most poisonous of these herbs, and brought them home to brew a draught for her once dearly-loved husband; and that young man who had listened as carefully to the hermit's discourse as his wicked wife, plucked, in similar fashion, the same poisonous herbs.

"The wood-cutter's wife, having prepared her draught, began to make overtures to her one-time husband, and so-called brother, asking him to come on the *pasli*¹ day to her apartments, and drink some milk which she had specially prepared for him; and the man, nothing loth, consented, for this helped his own plan, bringing with him some of his own prepared milk which he intended to substitute for the cup she, herself, might drink. Arriving at his one-time wife's apartments, she handed him the prepared milk, and took one for herself with many gay smiles.

"Engaging her, then, in some conversation, whilst her attention was withdrawn, the wood-cutter drew from under his loin-cloth, his own cup of prepared milk, and substituted that, stealthily, for her own cup.

"So, these two wicked people, drinking each of the prepared cups of one another, died, and night found them both, lying together, caught in the net of their own wicked wiles of evil.

"The old hermit and his wife found them thus on the following morning. In great grief, they prepared their funeral pyre and burnt them together.

¹ *Pasli*—a day in India sacred to brothers and sisters: the sister ties a bracelet of gold with jewels or thread of gold—according to her circumstances on the brother's wrist; and the brother gives presents to the sister of value in accordance with his rank. See footnote *Rakhni*, page 83.

“ So great was the shock that the hermit and his wife felt at this sudden and new calamity, that from that day onwards, it was, indeed, very easy for them to continue a life of chastity, both in deed and thought.

“ The wood-cutter and his wife died with no time for repentance in their sins which demanded from them a quick re-birth, as well as suitable punishment : a punishment, moreover, which would give them the knowledge of their sin and the justice of their fate, because of its affinity with a hermit. You are these two, and I—the old hermit ; and, if you will look into that hut, you will see lying there that very wife of mine whom you, O man ! coveted in your past birth ; for, to-day, she died, but with her vows intact, at last, and her repentance, like mine, complete, for the gods to register.

“ Take up the broken pieces of the water-pot which can never be put together till it be again resolved into its former element, and when, and where, the potter may think fit to re-mould it is a question that none of us mortals can satisfactorily answer.

“ To you two, I say, that old thoughts die not easily ; for, again, this woman of yours came here to do mischief, and revive memories of old evil doings. To you, O man ! who were always better than this woman, yet were so utterly under her influence, against your better judgment, as to make you worthy of contempt equal to that we bear against her, leave her for at least a year.

“ If, during that time, she proves faithful to you—and of that there is very little possibility—then marry her, cleave to her, and the curse will be over for all time. But, I fear much that night will fall and you will not heed my advice, and the fates, that write so inexorably their decisions, will take fresh toll from you both for the evil deeds of

the past. Still—who knows? Believe me, I have not cursed you, for with your fate lies my own.

“I have merely read your future. I tell you, too, that the gods—pray to them, I implore you—may, if they will, avert the danger. The good intervene of their own goodness, giving of their own virtue which neutralises the poison of many evil births of man.”

Having spoken thus, the hermit relapsed into his meditation and spoke no more.

Now, it so happened that a certain celestial hidden by his invisible mantle from the eyes of the mortals was, at that time, near the hermitage and, listening, attentively, to the dialogue of the hermit, specially to the last sentence of all; and he determined in his mind to follow the pair of lovers as they wended sadly homewards, and watch the sequence of events for himself; and, if possible, even at the sacrifice of some of his own great virtue, rescue them, for their ultimate salvation, from their downward fall.

As might have been expected, the two lovers, leaving the hermit, fell out, and with mutual recriminations—he reproving her for her rashness, she, reminding him that it was he who had destroyed her in her past birth, and he, retorting, that she, too, had desired his death, and achieved that desire—reached their home; when, their hatred of each other became so bitter that the man, crying out, at last, that it was useless to escape destiny drew his sword, and, even, as the old hermit had predicted, would have, there and then, destroyed the woman, had not the celestial being who had followed them both removed his invisibility in a twinkling of an eye, and stood before them in the shining garb of a dweller of the heavens.

In very surprise at this strange and beautiful apparition, the young man lost his nefarious intention, and stood

gazing at the beautiful being. 'The celestial being said : "O Foolish man! Have you not already been told that you have recklessly thrown away the birth before this one? And, yet, you propose to throw away this birth as well, dying with the seeds of anger still unburnt, and desires still unsatisfied, jeopardising a future birth as well! When will you recognise that the old hermit, linked to you by the affinity of hot passions, is, yet, an enemy of yours, that enmity forged by you in your wickedness? For, in this birth, he reminded you both of a past birth which had nothing of good in it for either of you, and which a kindly Providence would have hidden from your knowledge.

"Know! Silly creatures! Both of you, in many births—and in the previous birth, as well—did really desire to injure that old hermit and his wife; for he had injured you both, though very, very slightly, in other births; and the instinct for you—poor undeveloped creatures—to return the hurt, came naturally. But, because of the predominance of evil in you, an evil you do not choose even now to eradicate, you gave that instinct of revenge full play and to your own disadvantage.

"Just as the hermit said, you died before your evil act of the past birth was complete. You received your just punishment then and there: and that is, therefore, over.

"But there is one thing, still, owing to this old hermit: and it is this debt which, unpaid before sun-set, may well sway the balance of your evil deeds against you. Make, quickly, two acts of restitution, so that nothing further may remain to link you—either in this or any other birth—to this old hermit whom you have so consistently, and so unnecessarily, tried to injure—more to your own than to his detriment."

The man, bowing humbly, with clasped hands said to

the radiant being who stood before him: "Great denizen of the heavens, show us, I implore you, the way in which we may make the fullest restitution to that old hermit. I shall do it, if power in me be vouchsafed."

The celestial being replied, gravely: "First, restore to yourselves—that which you badly lack and which you have voluntarily deprived yourselves of—self-respect; and, to the hermit," the angel smiled, half in jest, half in sadness, pausing long enough for his words to have weight, "you owe him——" a long pause—a laugh as sweet as soft musical bells—another pause—and then, in tender, humorous tones: "a water-pot."

The celestial being, then, disappeared slowly from view.

The lovers, making the necessary purchase, hastened quickly back to the old hermit who was sunk in meditation, each carrying, in reverent, albeit frightened hands, a water-pot.

The celestial being who was watching their movements, saw, with alarm, that these two people had, actually, brought two water-pots, instead of the one demanded from them by the law of justice; and that great one soliloquised thus: "They are really very foolish, and this extra gift is mere conceit; for only one water-pot was demanded of them, and I, too, have told them so. They have left the equation incomplete despite my advice; for, whereas they were minus before, they are now plus.

"It is foolish to interfere in the fate of these mortals; I cannot afford to take further interest in them; let me see what happens by this unnecessary act."

The celestial being sighed deeply. Then, suddenly, seeing the future, he laughed.

And why he laughed, the reader shall, in due course, know fully in the story of the second water-pot.

IX

THE SECOND WATER POT

IX. THE SECOND WATER POT

UNDER a tree, in the deep of the forest, was built a little hut with grass-covered roof. In front of it was a little mud platform and, raised from the ground, by means of firmly-fixed bamboo-pieces, over which a piece of matting was strongly bound by means of coarse fibre, was an improvised seat, on which a grave old hermit sat in deep meditation : many days, sometimes, passing before he even opened his eyes.

One day, waking from his meditation, and looking round him, he saw two brand new water-pots in the place of an old water-pot of his, which—he remembered somewhat vaguely—had been broken, one day, by two irresponsible young people.

The hermit, seeing these two pots in the place of the one which was indispensable, became strangely unhappy, and brooded thus : “ Why should I be under the obligation of receiving a present from these two people? It is counted want of wisdom to accept from the unworthy. This second pot, moreover, is unnecessary.”

He saw, then, in introspection, that the giver of the unwanted gift had been the cause of great unhappiness to him, and a wife, now dead, in the previous birth. He saw, too, that he had done nothing, either in a past birth or in this one, to deserve this extra gift ; and was loth to have it thrust upon him ; for he believed that the weight of receiving a gift that was not necessary might easily prove too heavy a burden for him to bear ;

would bring him another birth to pay it back, or even many other births which might pass vainly away before opportunity placed him in a position to return the gift. The burden would then accumulate with time, till, to repay it in a single birth might prove well-nigh impossible.

"No! No!" reflected the unhappy hermit at this stage of his reasoning, recoiling in very horror at his thoughts, "this extra water-pot must not be the cause of my return to the world of unhappy mortals. I shall certainly not accept the gift."

Thus reasoning, the hermit remembered that, in the hollow of a certain tree, some little distance from the place where he had built his own hut, there lived another hermit who companionated with a snake, and these two had dwelt there, from time beyond memory, in peace with each other: which, by very reason of this closeness, was an unusual thing: for proximity seldom makes for amity.

"These two," thought the hermit, "must indeed be great souls."

He did not know the great law that hatred comes into being through fear, and that fear alone creates hatred. The hermit and the snake had lived sufficiently long together to have eliminated all fear of each other, and for this reason alone lived together in peace.

Our hermit called up to mind the fact that he had often seen a pot of milk, for the inmates, placed at the foot of the tree by the devoted people of the village. For the villagers, like himself, counted the inmates of the hollow as more than great souls, nay, the very presiding deities of the tree, whose blessings might help them, and whose displeasure would certainly prove harmful.

The hermit resolved to place the extra water-pot at the foot of that very tree, hoping, not only to rid himself

of all obligation to the man and woman who had given him this unwanted gift, but to earn for himself merit ; for he hoped that the villagers, seeing a new and larger pot, might be tempted to fill that in addition to the old pot, thus benefiting the inmates of the hollow to the extent of receiving two pots of milk instead of one.

Thus reasoning, following always the course of his own inclination, and mistaking this for sound and fair judgment, the old hermit took the extra pot, and placed it at the foot of the old peepul tree where the other hermit and his companion, the snake, had taken up their abode.

The hermit, then, returned to his accustomed seat on his self-made *charpoy*¹ feeling well pleased with himself, and forgetting his old reasoning and that the water-pot was of no use to him, was fully convinced that he had done something very meritorious.

Now, it so happened that, in the old peepul tree, the snake which had lived so harmoniously with the hermit there—for both were joined together in this and past births by their common desire for a pot of milk which need not entail upon them any effort of procuring—like other snakes of its kind in the rainy season was restless, due to the desire to shed its skin.

And, it also happened that, on the very day when the first hermit had placed the water-pot at the foot of the tree, the heavens opened, and it began to rain in torrents. It rained so violently that the hollow of the tree was filled with water to the great discomfort of the inmates, especially of the snake who, like all snakes, disliked wetness of any kind, and was already feeling sufficiently wretched by reason of the pain due to the loosening of its skin. The added discomfort of rain proved too much for it to bear. It slithered down from out of the hollow in the tree,

¹ An improvised bed with four supports. *Charpaya* means literally—four legs.

making for the ground beneath ; but, fell, instead, straight into the large, empty water-pot.

In vain did the snake try to get out of its new abode ; despite all its efforts it could not, and wearied by many efforts, it lay, at last, inert and to all intents and purposes unconscious. It remained in this comatose condition all night, till the sun climbed slowly up from behind the highest trees of the forest and warmed the snake to some semblance of life.

Now, the devout people of the village who placed the milk at the foot of the tree, though believing firmly that two *devatas*¹ inhabited the peepul tree, did not know the inmates were only a poor old hermit, and a blind snake ; or that these two, and no gods, were the partakers of their offerings.

So, when that morning a snake-charmer, of the village, who, during the rains collected new snakes for his performances, heard some sound in the water-pot, and, looking into it, discovered, lying there, a very large good-looking snake, he did not, for a single moment, realise that here was one of the holy inmates of the tree—an object of veneration to all the people of the village, himself included.

He was, merely, glad to have secured a snake so quickly and so easily, and, accepting it as an offering from the gods, turned it out of the pot, to re-catch it deftly, in the manner taught to him by his forefathers, pinioning its head with a cleft stick that he carried for that very purpose ; then running his hand up from tail to neck, he held the head firmly in his clenched hand. He, then, placed the snake in a round basket which he had brought for that very purpose, and closed the top by firmly tying down the small flat cover with many strands of rope.

He, then, wended his way back home. There, he

¹ Spirits.

carefully re-examined the snake, pinioning and holding it in the self-same manner, whilst his son, roughly prizing open the poor snake's mouth with an instrument, prepared to extract the poison fangs with a pair of forceps.

It was then that they discovered that there was not left a single tooth in the old snake's head. The snake-charmer, thereupon, allowed the snake to wander loose on the floor of his lower room : and, as the days passed by, by virtue of its quiet, harmless ways, it became the pet of the younger members of the family who gave him many dainties to eat and delighted in watching him grow fat and sleek.

The snake had only one unhappiness now : when the charmer played his bag-pipes.

In common with other snakes, it was deaf ; but, so sensitive is the spinal column of snakes that sounds affect them to an extraordinary degree, and the sound of the bag-pipes set up vibrations of so overwhelming a character, that our snake was forced to sit up on its coiled body, and sway itself to and fro in a very agony of effort to rid itself of the tickling sensation.

Though it was blind, our snake, somehow or other, connected this disagreeable sensation with the music and the player of the music ; and when the sound of the pipe died down, the snake felt an uncontrollable anger, and hit out, wildly, in the direction of his tormentor.

The surrounding people, laughing, thought, foolishly enough, that the snake loved the music, and was angry because it had stopped.

After these performances, however, the snake was consoled for his torment by being well fed with milk and fruit ; and the children collected live frogs for its supper.

The snake realised that its new menu was more delectable than the pot of milk, for which it had so long

cherished a craving. Especially did the snake enjoy the frogs : for it had never before tasted anything so luscious, to a snake, as a live frog. Gradually, the remembrance of that pot of milk faded from its brain-cells, overlaid, if not actually replaced, by more vivid and intense appetites and desires.

And as memory is the very seat of desire, with the loss of the recollection of that pot of milk went the remembrance, too, of the hermit connected with it, and with him the hollow in the old peepul tree. For memory is linked by the association of ideas, and once this association is broken, memory is also broken.

So much for the snake.

The old hermit remained on in the hollow of the peepul tree, utterly oblivious to everything in the outside world except his evening pot of milk which memory made him drink, regularly, at the exact time.

He realised, vaguely, that his companion had vanished : but as this gave him more milk to drink, he was not wholly displeased, accepting the fact as part of Fate's wise plan.

He counted this acceptance as true philosophy, not sufficiently wise to distinguish between sublimated selfishness and true philosophy which has no selfishness at all in its composition.

The storm, that had dislodged the snake from the hollow, continued unabated for several days ; and the hermit was far from being comfortable. He even thought, seriously, of surrendering what he thought a self-imposed penance : but, reflecting further, realised that leaving the hollow would deprive him of his regular supply of milk, and the desire for that pot of milk kept him chained, as it were, to the tree : was, indeed, the only reason why he remained there.

Now, it so happened that, a number of wild Bhils, as was their wont after rain, came to collect fallen branches from the trees and cut, surreptitiously, fresh wood which they would assure the headman of the village had been blown down by the storm.

They had come from some distance ; and had drunk a considerable quantity of raw spirits to keep out the cold.

By chance, they happened to come to the very tree in which the hermit had taken up his abode, and began to hack at the branches.

The noise aroused the hermit from his meditation, and he put his head out of the hollow to discover the cause of the disturbance. The Bhils, looking up at that moment, saw what they believed to be a very wild-looking devil.

Had they been sober, they might have been frightened into running away ; but drink has the unique quality of driving away fear ; not altogether an enviable quality where drunkards are concerned.

One of the Bhils who had partaken of more spirits than the rest, picking up the nearest missile which happened to be the water-pot, flung it with all his might at the apparition ; and the hermit, dodging too late, received the other hermit's present full in the stomach, and lay, for some time, completely winded.

Fortunately, for our hermit, after this act of bravado, the courage of the Bhils evaporated, and they made off towards the village.

The old hermit, recovering his wind with difficulty, began to extricate himself from the pieces of the water-pot and spent an unprofitable half an hour picking splinters out of himself, and clearing his hollow of jagged pieces of earthenware.

The Bhils, meanwhile, went on to the village, and the Bhil who had flung the water-pot, meeting a boon

companion at the village fair where gambling was in progress, won for himself the unusually large sum of five silver pieces, more money than he had ever had before in his life. He was by reason of this fact extremely elated.

In trying to recall the act of merit he had done to achieve this good fortune, one of the lords of karma who was, at that moment, balancing the deeds of the day, played a jest.

Sometimes, though rarely, in adjusting their balance sheet, the gods of karma leave a handsome margin to allow for that very wholesome ingredient in life's mess of pottage, humour; believing that humour plays a very great part in evolution.

So, this lord of karma—balancing the acts of the day, and for the spurring on of evolution, which, as the reader will shortly discover, actually happened—put into the head of the drunken Bhil the extraordinary notion that by hitting the hermit, in the tree, whom the Bhil had thought the devil, the Bhil had done a deed pleasing to the gods who, themselves, had provided for him the means of harassment: the empty water-pot.

The Bhil, thereupon, swore a great oath, by the tigress-goddess of his tribe, that he would go every evening to that self-same tree, and continue to throw pieces of that very water-pot—since the whole one was no longer available—at the devil; and he—this bravo of a Bhil—would rid the universe, at last, of the devil in person.

Thus reasoning, every evening, to the horror of that poor old hermit, the drunkard, filling himself with raw liquor to keep alive his courage, arrived, punctually at the foot of the tree, at a time when he knew no one was about, and continued to fling chunks of the broken water-pot at the unfortunate hermit: returning, afterwards, to the village to win, as always, coins of either silver or

copper at gambling ; and, always, the Bhil attributed his good luck to his meritorious act of hitting the devil in the tree.

Now, that water-pot was, unfortunately for the hermit, of an extra large size ; and though the hermit was careful, now, not to throw out any more of the pieces that came into the hollow, preferring rather the discomfort of lying on them to that of having them flung violently at him, still, the Bhil had no dearth of pieces.

The hermit, by sheer force of habit, was loth to leave his abode of years ; so he suffered the nuisance for several days. But, finally, the conglomeration of bruises and cuts all over his body making him unable to meditate on anything but the Bhil ; and, fearing that by virtue of this meditation, he might become the thing he meditated upon—a Bhil—in a future birth, the hermit determined to leave, once and for all, the hollow in the tree.

So, watching his chance, he climbed down with great difficulty, and began painfully to walk away, looking round, every now and then, over his shoulder, to be sure that his enemy, the Bhil, was not following.

In the course of time, the hermit came to the hut occupied by that other hermit, and sat down by it, very wearily, waiting for the return of its occupant.

The other hermit, coming from the village, found him there and made him welcome.

Having given him food and drink, he asked him, very courteously, to give him his history.

The hermit of the tree replied : “ Holy friend ! I have passed many years of my life in meditation in the hollow of an old peepul tree in the jungle not so very far from your hermitage. As sole companion, I had a snake who has suddenly disappeared, realising, no doubt, by some gift of foresight which has been denied to me,

that there was coming to our hollow an enemy who would by now have surely killed my poor companion, but for the fact that he has escaped, just in time.

"This enemy of mine has formed for himself the novel pastime of aiming chunks of earthen pot at such parts of my anatomy that are visible to him from below; and even if I remain, as I believe, completely invisible, so accurate is the fellow's aim that he manages, invariably, somehow or other, to get me in a vital spot.

"The whole cause of my misery I trace to a wretched water-pot which someone—no doubt another enemy of my past birth—has forgotten, leaving it, to my misfortune, as the missile for my enemy at the very foot of my abode.

"But for this loss of memory on the part of this enemy of mine; the drunkard, I am sure, could never have conceived the idea of throwing either it or its pieces at me.

"I have not yet decided why he does it—whether it is out of sheer perfidy or merely to test the correctness of his aim—but this much he has successfully achieved: he has made me decide, now and for ever, that that hollow is no longer fit for human habitation. I relinquish it, with pleasure, to the devil to whom I feel it must surely belong, and whose offering of milk I have wrongly imbibed."

The other hermit, listening to this sad tale, was shocked; for he saw that it was he, alone, who had been the cause of his companion's misfortune: and, remembering, somewhat wryly, his own advice to others as to the ill consequences that attend on an unnecessary deed, he hung his head in shame.

In low tones, he requested the hermit of the tree to spend the remainder of his life with him in the grass hut, which offer was gratefully accepted by the other.

So destiny had assured for the hermit the forming of

a new and more appropriate link ; one, more in accordance with the law of nature : and, out of an apparent evil, good had come.

Now, a certain celestial being who had played a part in a previous drama of one of these two hermits, and who clothed in his invisible mantle was listening to them, was astonished that so small a thing as an empty pot could yet play so great a part in the lives of mortals.

With the inner wisdom that belongs to the celestials, he saw that the water-pot had given to both the hermit and the snake that very impetus of which he himself had spoken elsewhere as hard to get : an impetus to spur on evolution, ensuring change, bringing movement into what had become well-nigh stagnant.

For, he saw that that lazy, old hermit and that equally lazy, old snake would not have, without the aid of that water-pot, left their useless way of living ; and this wrong companionship which gave nothing to each other might have continued indefinitely.

“Do not these mortals know,” reflected the angel, “that life itself is change, and the sole purpose of its change is for its betterment?”

Then he sighed ; for he saw with his inner eye of wisdom that though the change had occurred, yet, because of age-old affinities, if these new and fresh opportunities vouchsafed to mortals were not made good, they might yet find themselves back again in old grooves : these two—for instance—in the hollow of a tree : an old hermit, a blind snake—linked together by a common desire : which was for these two, the pot of milk which had held them to existence and to each other for so many lives.

The angel left these two hermits seated together on the matting before the grass-roofed hermitage, both vowed to a new life together.

He pondered, greatly, on the drama that was the life of mortals, reflecting how meet it was that, in trivial lives it should be trivial needs that bound one to the other—a pot of milk for hermit and snake holding two existences together : equally trivial things that swept away trivial bonds. A water-pot could sever the connection of a hermit and a snake !

Further philosophizing, he saw that trivialities were great events in the lives of the trivial.

The celestial being, seeing the unstable ways and the lack of foresight in mortals, and their unhappiness, longed to teach them the wisdom that would make them immortal and give them peace.

X

THE GIFT OF A BAD GENIUS

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THERE was a certain king whose possessions stretched from the sources of the Nerbuda to its mouth.

He had all the gifts that are given by the gods to the most fortunate of mortals : he had, too, a very beautiful wife, and a prosperous State to which he, sometimes, gave considerable attention, and, sometimes, none whatsoever : and this is where he failed ; for, though he was fortunate in having good ministers, and the State came to no harm, those who have much time on their hands grow restless, and prone to rash enterprise and desire, and to the restless, misfortune invariably comes ; and misfortune was already in store for the king.

For, though this king was master of many men, elephants and horses, this restlessness was the cause of a wrong desire.

On the banks of the Nerbuda, there lived, in a hermitage, a certain holy man who used to meditate from morn till eve. The king had great and exceeding respect for him, and had, always, attended, assiduously, to his wants which were, however, few in number.

Now, to this hermit, the king went one morning ; and in the course of conversation asked him if it were possible to gain control of one of the lower genii.

The old man, reading the king's mind, understood what was wanted of him, and became very unhappy. He begged the king not to entertain this desire in his mind.

The hermit said : " Great king ! You are the sovereign of a great dominion. Why, then, do you seek the com-

panionship of a Jinn? The companionship of the good brings happiness, and the companionship of the wicked evil and disaster. You have everything that a man can desire. In appearance you are like the husband of Rati¹: you have untold wealth. What more do you require?"

The king rather shamefacedly replied: "Holy sage! There are many things which I have not, and which I want: for instance, I cannot fly, neither can I change my body at will. I am told that these supernatural powers can be acquired by capturing one of the lower order of the genii, and wresting from them this gift. Oh! Holy sage! Please teach me some charm by which I may capture one of these genii, and gain from him the secret of entering other bodies."

The hermit said sorrowfully: "Great king! Already you have fallen: for you a great *Dātā*,² have chosen to beg of a denizen of the lower worlds, I ask you, once more, to think no more about this matter: for, though by virtue of the great store of religious merit you have acquired in a past birth, you may, yet, break down the sin acquired by this unlawful desire of yours, the result of your wish will bring you suffering.

But the king, by very virtue of the fact that all of his desires had, in the past, been fulfilled so easily, and nothing denied him, remained adamant in his determination that this very undesirable desire of his should also be fulfilled and not denied.

The hermit, sighing, then took him a little distance from the hermitage, and writing on a paper certain numbers, he burnt it, when a sound of thunder was heard in the air; and before them both rose a pillar of smoke which reached

¹ Kamdeva, the god of love, was the husband of Rati.

² Giver—a term used only for the great.

to the sky. A voice from the centre of the smoke called out: "O King! Riches thou hast in plenty: is it not enough that for my sins I have been condemned to everlasting remorse for them, but thou, too, must needs torture and worry me?"

The king said firmly: "Teach me the magical formula by which I can leave my body and enter that of another, and go, then, in peace."

The genius laughed angrily; then, shouting out two words, told the king that by repeating them three times, the king would be able to enter the body of anyone whose rightful inmate was no longer there.

Thus saying, the genius disappeared, leaving behind him an odour of brimstone.

The king was highly delighted, and the hermit and he proceeded to return to the hermitage.

On the way there, lying in a thicket, was the dead body of a pigeon; and the king, seeing it, thought that it was a very good opportunity for him to test the efficacy of the words given to him by the genius: so requesting the holy man to look after his kingly body, the king uttering the charm in the prescribed manner with the desire to enter the dead body of the pigeon uppermost in his mind, left his own body; which, as if struck by a thunderbolt fell to the ground; and the king realised he had, indeed, entered the body of the pigeon.

The king now experienced the new and hitherto unknown joy of flying; he flew over the hermitage beneath him, he looked down on his own fallen body, the hermit sitting beside it with downcast head telling his beads. Then the king played merrily with a she-pigeon that, till then, had been lamenting in a tree for the loss of her mate, and both flew out of sight of the hermit.

Now, at the time of the genius teaching the secret

formula to the king, a man of very low caste was cutting wood in the jungle near by and had fallen asleep.

Awakened by the sound of thunder in the heavens, he started hastily to collect his wood to return home before it rained, when, seeing a pillar of smoke rise from the earth to the heavens, he fell flat on his face in mortal fear. He heard, then, the king's request, and the fatal words by which a man might enter the body of another.

When the genius had disappeared, the low-caste man, regaining courage, got up and began to follow the king and hermit at some distance.

The wood-cutter was a very cunning rogue, and surmised, rightly enough, that the king would not lose any opportunity of testing the efficacy of the magical words: and, sure enough, he saw the king's body fall to the ground, and a pigeon soar suddenly and joyfully overhead from an adjoining thicket.

So the wood-cutter, too, decided to try the effect of the charm, and repeating the two words three times, wished himself the king.

In a flash of time, the king stood upright, to the surprise of the hermit, for the pigeon was still flying overhead; and, bowing low to the hermit, began quickly to return to the palace.

Now the hermit was sorely puzzled, his eyes still following the flight of the pigeon in the sky; then he saw the pigeon, too, disappear suddenly. The hermit returned to his hermitage for his evening prayers, unhappy and uncertain.

After awhile, however, the king, getting tired of being a pigeon, thought of returning to his own body; he flew down to the place where he had left that body. He found no trace of either his body, or the hermit, and becoming anxious, flew here and there searching vainly.

He flew then to the hermitage, and saw the old hermit with arms uplifted, his palms to the setting sun, reciting the evening prayers.

The king knew the hermit too well to suspect him of hiding his body. So he flew to the palace, and there, to his utter amazement, he saw himself, laughing heartily, and chatting freely with officers and attendants alike.

Now, indeed, did the king know for certain that somebody had stolen his body: for the person in his form was behaving as he—the king—had never done before.

Returning, again, to the place where he had left his body, the king, flying hither and thither, discovered by the wayside the body of a low-caste man. The king believed that this must be the body of the man who had overheard the formula and stolen the king's body.

It was now left to the poor king to remain either in the form of a pigeon or take that of a low-caste man. The king, discovering too late that the body of a man was preferable to that of a bird, decided, with loathing, to enter the body of the low-caste man.

Bitterly did the poor king repent, now, his foolish desire to be something which the Great God had not ordained. All desire of entering the body of any other than the body of himself had left him now for ever.

To add to his misfortunes the memory of his beautiful wife came to fill him with pain; for the thought that the low-caste man, using his body, would call her wife made him tremble with horror.

He hastily entered the dead body of the low-caste man, and washing himself carefully reached the palace at sun-set. He was stopped at the gates by the guards who asked him his business at that late hour.

The king replied: "A message for the queen; it is a question which concerns her husband. I implore you by the great gods to let me have word with her."

But the palace servants laughed to scorn the very suggestion that a strange man, one moreover of no dignity of mien, should see the queen; and were on the point of driving him away, when a certain maid-servant who was very much attached to the queen, and who had come with a tray of food for the captain of the guard, said falsely: "I know this fellow, let him remain, and have food with me, and after hearing what he has to say, I shall see him personally away."

The captain of the guard agreed, insisting, however, that the man must not stay the night in the palace grounds, as it was against the king's orders. The maid-servant, beckoning to the king, took him to one side, and giving him some food bade him eat; and the king who had eaten no food the whole day except a little grain in a paddy field, thought the food given to him, though it was the coarsest his palace provided, delicious, and ate it with a relish that he had never before experienced when he was king eating the choicest of dishes.

The maid-servant looking at him intently asked him then what was the message he had wished to give to the queen regarding her husband.

The king knew that if he told her the truth he would make himself the laughing stock of the maid-servant and guards. He said: "I wish you to give the queen this message, and if you truly love her, you will not fail to deliver that message to her." Tears began, then, to stream down his cheeks, and seeing these tears, the maid-servant became impressed despite herself; for the particularly mean appearance of the man who was speaking had made her almost repent of her offer of food.

She said: "What is the message? I shall give it to her without fail."

The king replied: "Tell her to note the change that has come over the king, and avoid him for a few days in the name of the Great God. Tell her, on no account, to spend a single minute alone with the king: or her husband will die, and she will become an ill-omened one."¹ These were harsh words: words that no one could easily dare say; and the maid-servant looked at the speaker thoughtfully.

Just then, the captain of the guard came to say it was time for the man to leave the palace as the gates were being closed for the night. So the king had to leave his own palace to wander miserably about the whole night. He decided to go to the hermitage in the morning, and communicate to the hermit the tragedy that had overtaken him.

But, when morning came, he reached the hermitage only to find, to his great sorrow, that the spirit of the old hermit had fled from his body. The king waited some time, hoping, against hope, that the spirit of the old hermit would return to give him advice; but when he was completely convinced that the hermit was, indeed, dead; and knowing that very shortly servants from the palace would be coming to serve the hermit, he left the body of the low-caste man and entered that of the hermit.

He, then, carried the body of the low-caste man to a little distance and left it there. He, then, bathed and awaited the arrival of the servants from the palace.

In the meanwhile, the night before, the maid-servant, entering the apartments of the queen, had carried the message, though not without some trepidation, that the low-caste man had given her about the king.

¹ Widow.

The queen fell into a deep reverie ; she had, indeed, noticed, even in these few hours, a subtle difference in her husband : his manner, she had observed, had lost the reticence that is inseparable from good breeding. Moreover, the king, that night, had done a thing which he had never done before : he had dined with people who were neither his equal in rank nor culture.

She felt convinced that some evil spirit had cast a spell over him, and decided, finally, to take the advice that had been given to her through her maid-servant ; though knowing that the person who gave it was a low-caste man, she had hesitated long ; for she was wise, and knew that they who take the advice of the mean lacked prudence.

Some inner sense of her own, however, coupled with this voice, made her determine to pass, at least, that night in her own apartments, and plead indisposition. In the morning she resolved to place her difficulties before the holy hermit.

Now the pseudo-king was looking eagerly forward to the night when he should have the pleasure of meeting the queen in the privacy of their chambers. He was, therefore, very disappointed and angry when he heard that the queen was not well, and was retiring early to her own apartments.

In a gruff voice, he commanded her maid that healthy, or not healthy, his wife should come to him that night. Now this very request was so utterly unlike the gentle king who was always very considerate of her feelings, that the queen grew frightened ; and was more than ever determined that she would not be with the king in private until she had taken the advice of the hermit.

Therefore, she barricaded her doors and bade her maid-servant inform the king that she was not in a fit

condition to come to the royal apartments, else she would, certainly, have obeyed his orders.

The maid-servant who took the message was not ill-looking and pleased the low-caste man; he agreed to abide by the queen's wishes provided the maid-servant stayed with him for the night.

The queen, on hearing of this, was again very much perturbed; for this was the first time her husband had shown any inclination for the company of low people.

She woke up very early the next morning, and ordering her palanquin started for the hermitage.

Now, in going to the hermitage, the queen had never before taken permission from the king to leave the palace, as it was an understood thing between them that she could freely visit the hermit, whenever she chose.

To-day, however, there was a difference. The king seeing from his bedroom window the procession leaving the palace enquired what it was: and learning that it was the queen who was going to the hermitage, he flew into a fierce temper; and ordered his guards to bring her back, saying that if she were too ill to sleep with him, she was too ill to see the hermit.

All the attendants stood aghast at this change in the king who had always respected the queen, and all were now assured that some evil spirit had taken hold of the king.

Nothing, however, could be done, and the queen was forced to return to her apartments. She was now extremely frightened and dismayed; but she determined to send the prime minister secretly to the hermit and get his advice.

So, later in the day, the prime minister arrived at the hermitage, where he saw the real king, in a very melancholy condition, in the hermit's body.

The hermit was not surprised to hear from the prime minister that there was a change in the king ; and as the hermit was greatly respected by one and all, the king decided to take the prime minister a little into his confidence.

He took the minister aside and showed him the body of the low-caste man. "Alas!" he said softly, "this creature, by some penance of a past birth, has ousted the king temporarily from his body. Has anyone died in the city lately?"

The prime minister replied: "Yes. The richest commoner in the state, and had he lived two minutes longer, in time to affix his signature to a document, the king would have gained a great fortune."

The hermit laughed sadly: "He would not care for that, he has sufficient of his own."

Then a thought struck him and he said: "You know the real king does not care for money; but this low-caste man must surely care for money. I have a plan."

He bade the prime minister return to the queen, and tell her to humour the king for awhile, tell her, also, that somebody had usurped the king's body, but the hermit would come to the palace and matters would be put right.

So the prime minister returned to the queen with the message of the hermit, and later the hermit himself arrived at the palace; and the pseudo-king seeing him coming was displeased and anxious.

The hermit entered the durbar as was his wont, and in a soft voice told the king that what he had to say was for the king's ears alone. The king rose reluctantly. He was very uneasy, and wondered if the holy man knew who he really was and had come to expose him; at any rate he feared his imprecations: for the mean-hearted, though elevated to kingship, will, always, carry with them the marks of their serfdom.

Courage is essentially a thing of race. This courage of the sensitive is of the spirit, and not to be confounded with the insensitiveness of brute bodies.

The hermit said: "Do you remember the words the genius gave you yesterday by which you changed your form to a pigeon?"

The false king delighted now to think that he had cheated the hermit, said "Yes."

The hermit went on: "To-day you will gain a huge fortune of several crores of silver pieces. This fortune, unless the document is signed, will go to a brother who is already sufficiently rich, and is, moreover, of a mean and uncharitable disposition.

"If you will come with me now to the house of the Bania—for the body is about to be taken to the cremation ground—I shall again look after your body whilst you enter that of the Bania for the few minutes necessary for you to sign your name. Then, return again to your own body, and the money thus acquired will not only be useful to you, but you may use it for the acquisition of much religious merit in doing good deeds which that brother of the Bania would never dream of doing."

Now, in the heart of that low-caste man who suspected nothing, came cupidity in its worse form; and he willingly consented to go with the hermit. They, then, both left the palace by a secret way and arrived at the Bania's house.

The king covered his face as was the method of mourners, and none recognised him; but the hermit received great attention. He asked them to allow him to pray by the side of the body, alone except for his attendant.

This was much appreciated by the relations of the dead Bania, who left the room. The hermit, bidding the false king to arrange himself, as if in sleep, nearest to the door

leading into the street, the hermit, himself, then, lay near him and covering them both with one rug bade the low-caste man enter the body of the dead Bania, and, then, call out and ask for the unsigned document.

This, the false king did willingly, and, in a moment, the real king regaining his own body, and knowing that the would-be king, having signed the document, would come back to where he knew the hermit still lay, in feigned sleep, under the rug, and fearing he might then enter the body of the holy hermit, and having no wish that the body of his *guru* should be defiled, quietly slithered himself into the street dragging with him the body of the hermit. He then lifted up the body and disappeared down an alley unobserved which was not difficult, for, hearing the Bania's voice, the people in the adjoining room had rushed in, and there was much hub-hub and great rejoicings at the apparent resuscitation of the dead man. The Bania called out for pen and ink and his unsigned document, and having put down his name at the bottom of the document, died again ; and, now, the relations becoming alarmed and fearing that his body was being used by some genius lifted it up quickly and hastened it to the cremation ground. In a few moments they were at the burning place, and the fire was applied to the dead body, the relatives regretting now that they had kept it unburnt for such a long time.

The spirit of the low-caste man, rushing to the place near the door, found neither the body of the king nor the hermit.

Horror-stricken, the low-caste man wandered miserably about seeking in vain for an abode. His own body near the hermitage was so mangled by the jackals that it was no longer usable. Fear at being without an abode came over him with overwhelming force ; suddenly he saw the

dead body of a snake, and in sheer desperation, he entered that body.

So everything came right, in the end, for the king. He confided everything that had happened to the queen, and went with her to pay their last homage to the hermit whose body was now lying in state in the Durbar hall.

Even as they looked at the corpse of the old man, his limbs, which were stiff and cold, began to move and the closed eyes opened.

For a moment they both believed that, by some trick, the low-caste man had, indeed, taken possession of the body of the hermit ; but, in a little while, they saw their mistake.

The hermit sat up with an effort, and spoke : “ My son, let this be a lesson to you not to hanker after that which is not ordained for you by God. Know that discovering in meditation your extremity, I left my body in *samadhi*, hoping and wishing that you should use it. I knew, when the prime minister came to the hermitage, that all would be well ; for there is no difficulty that the wise cannot surmount. But, it is only by the accumulation of a large amount of merit that you have been saved from continued unhappiness ; and, let me tell you, it was also, the good deeds of this holy lady, at your side, that swayed the balance so quickly in your favour. She is a chaste woman who has never had thought for any man, beyond you, her husband : therefore the gods of Karma preserved her chastity when, through no fault of her own, it was about to be lost. For, though the body was your very own body, yet the soul was the soul of a low-caste man : and this man’s affinity was the servant girl whom fates had ordained for him that night.

He has, now, suffered the fate of those who would aspire to a position to which they are not fitted by their

deeds, culture or fate. He has fallen much lower than he was when he walked the earth in the body of a low-caste man ; and when he will free himself from that new form which he was forced to take by his ill deeds, I do not know.

His fate is not undeserved.

My children ! Live happily, now onwards, with each other. And, O King ! Give that money, which you cannot rightly claim as your own, to the poor, so that some good may come out of evil."

XI

EVERYTHING FOR THE BEST

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THERE was, in ancient days, a young king whose domains extended from the Himalayas in the North to the island of Lanka¹ in the South ; from Cutch in the West to the River Irrawady in the East.

So large, indeed, was this king's vast kingdom that to collect the great wealth due to him, caravans, camels, bullock carts, horses and elephants laden with gold, silver, pearls, jewels and merchandise of every kind ceased not a moment in their long course to his capital at any time.

Even Kabir² might have felt envious at the extent of this king's treasures, had it not been for the fact that the gods are not envious : that quality being reserved exclusively for man and the demons.

This king, fortunate in the vastness of his domains and his treasure, was equally fortunate in his ministers who ruled vast lands beyond his capital with justice and honesty : and his ministers, at home, who served him with love, honesty and fidelity.

The king's prime minister was his uncle who had watched him grow up from boyhood to manhood.

There was the merest difference of years between the ages of uncle and nephew : so that relations between the two were not only those of uncle and nephew, preceptor and pupil, minister and king ; but, by reason of the nearness of their ages, the more intimate one, of friend and companion.

¹ Ceylon.

² The god of wealth

Wherever the king went, there, his minister, Pratapsingh by name, went also; and uncle and nephew shared many tastes in common with each other.

Now, this minister, amongst many other lovable qualities, had the unique one of unswerving belief in a Divine and Beneficent Providence that shaped all things for the ultimate good of mankind.

However great a calamity might occur, the minister was not only convinced that this Divinity was guiding the destinies of man, but was assured, and assured others, too, that everything that happened, happened for the very best.

Sometimes, this unshaken belief of the minister in this divine and always benevolent Providence was a source of annoyance to others: for, unlike the minister, not all could, or would, see the silver lining to the blackest of clouds.

Often, the king, too, doubted and ventured the thought that Providence might, sometimes, make mistakes; and he would quote in support of his arguments, the numerous famines, the pestilences, the wars that have beset mankind at some time or other of their existence.

But Pratapsingh would, invariably, reply that the inscrutable motives of Providence must of a necessity remain unknown to mere mortals with their limited intelligence and vision: venturing further, he said that, even famines, pestilences, wars might have their good purpose: a purpose destined to serve the ultimate good of the majority of mankind: famines, he would say, must surely help people to see the necessity of being thrifty: pestilences make man realise the real value of a personal and social cleanliness, of public sanitation: wars, too, he believed, must serve in the end, if only to show to mortals at last, the uselessness, not only of

quarrelling but, of the crudeness of this method of settling disputes.

"After many lives," the minister would say, "perfect wisdom and perfect peace must ultimately be the lot of all mankind: for eternal happiness and peace is the heritage of man."

Now, one day, it so happened that, when the king was out riding with Pratapsingh, a deer darted out from the brushwood from the right and made off across the road to the left.

The minister, on seeing this, reined up his horse saying: "Great king! Our forefathers considered this movement of the deer an unfavourable omen: for the deer has placed your majesty on its left.¹ Let us accept the decision of the wiseacres who tell us that the superior beasts must keep on the right side of man, and the inferior beasts show themselves not at all, and believe that to-day is not an auspicious one for us, and we should return to our homes."

But the king said laughingly: "I shall not return home. Come! Come! Why not this dishonour, too, be for the best?"

And, putting his horse at full speed, the king rode after the deer into the very heart of the jungle, so swiftly that Pratapsingh had much ado to keep up with him; and thus they galloped for over an hour, when, the deer, as well as all signs of a track, disappeared from view.

They soon realised that they were hopelessly lost; and the king who was very tired, hungry and thirsty, and who wished inwardly that he had accepted the omen and his minister's advice, and turned back instead of following the deer, began to grow restive.

¹ To place a king, whose place is always on the right, on the left is counted an insult in India.

Heedless disregard of the custom or of the superstition of any country, more especially one's own, thought the king moodily, had not appeared wise in this instance. Superstition, he remembered someone saying, was a half-truth founded on the memory of some forgotten danger.

Partly to while away the time till the king's attendants should find them, and partly in admonition, the minister began to narrate to the king a tale of how his father, returning late one morning from the temple, found himself addressed by a man of the very lowest caste in the street.¹ The old king was very upset, and counting this an ill-omen hastened back to his palace, and had had himself, there and then, weighed in pure gold, and the money distributed to the poor² of the town: for, he believed that, if a man of the lowest caste could gain sufficient courage to dare address a king, then either the iron age was assuredly at hand; or, the king's store of religious merit had been diminished, or was on the point of being utterly consumed.

The king, listening to this tale of his father, wondered if, it might not be that, just as a trivial straw could show the direction the mighty wind was blowing, so things, small in themselves, could indicate the trend of great events.

"Never mind," said the minister, finishing on his usual cheerful note, "let us continue to believe that everything happens for the best, and that even our troubles have, here, some definite purpose, and will be found useful to us in the end; at least we have learnt the wisdom of being more cautious."

¹ This is against all Indian court etiquette: the lower castes must remain silent or hidden before the superior ones. A low caste woman in India turns her back on the king, and hides her face. The king must not be addressed: it is his prerogative to address first.

² The late Maharaja of Udaipur did this on one occasion.

They, now, alighted from their horses, allowing them to go free in search of pasture; and, both began to search anxiously for something in the woods that they could eat. They soon realised that this was difficult: not only were they far from human habitation, but they seemed to be far from anything fit for human beings to eat.

After a protracted search they came upon a wood-apple tree upon which the minister found a solitary coarse wood-apple which he knocked down with difficulty, and offered it to the weary and hungry king who, in his eagerness to eat something quickly, began to chop it in two with his sword, holding the wood-apple on the ground with his left hand. The apple slipped, and the king's forefinger was lopped off from the hand.

Pratapsingh staunchly, with difficulty, the blood which was flowing freely: there was no water near, and for some time the bleeding persisted. This made the king say sarcastically to the minister: "Perhaps, you will now tell me that the loss of one of my fingers has, also, happened for the best."

Pratapsingh, though worried at the occurrence, replied earnestly: "Your Majesty, I sincerely believe that this, too, must have happened for the best."

Now, the king was already very much irritated by weariness, hunger and thirst: added to this was the pain due to his wound, and wounded vanity at the loss of one of his fingers. So this complacent reply of his minister irritated the hungry king beyond endurance. He lost all control of himself, and rushing violently at the minister with drawn sword, cried out: "At least two of your fingers, or an ear or a hand. All for the best, I assure you. Take yourself out of my sight, otherwise I swear, by the goddess, that you, too, shall be deprived of a limb—and all for the best, of course."

The minister was a brave man : but he was a wise one as well ; and he saw that this was no time for conciliation or argument : an angry man when he is hungry is dangerous, and the king, the minister was convinced, was in a mood to make good his words. The minister, therefore, removed himself to some distance, and seeing that the king, sword in hand, was inclined to pursue him, decided to take himself for the moment completely out of sight. At a safe distance, he hid himself in a thicket, fully assured that his master's anger would soon die down, and waiting for that moment when he would emerge from his very uncomfortable, even painful, hiding-place. The minister was a man of wisdom ; and precaution demanding he should remain hidden, though finding nothing better than a thicket, he resigned himself to circumstances.

In the meantime, the king, wearied beyond measure, flung himself down under a tree and exhausted by his pain, hunger and thirst fell into an uneasy slumber.

Now, it so happened that this was the last day of the festival of a certain wild tribe of Bhils who lived in the heart of this forest. According to their tradition, they were on the look-out for someone whom they might offer as a sacrifice to the tigress-goddess of their tribe. This blood-offering, they believed, would ensure for them a whole year of prosperity.

Coming suddenly upon the sleeping king, and seeing how handsome and fair was the face of this sleeping stranger who was dressed in rich, though disordered, garments, they were assured that the goddess herself had chosen this man, and no other, for the annual sacrifice.

They fell quickly upon him, pinioning his arms with a swiftness that foiled all attempts of escape, even had the sleeping king had time to defend himself.

They carried him off to their haunts, in the innermost

recesses of the forest, where a secret altar to their goddess was installed.

This altar, surrounded by a mud wall, was a roughly wrought stone, and behind it, crudely carved in wood, was the form of a woman with wide-open mouth, on which was smeared the red sticky blood of many sacrificed animals and birds.

The Bhils, arriving at this place, drove a sacrificial stake in front of the idol, and bound the king to the post : then, by beat of drum and cymbal, they gathered together the men and women of the Bhil tribe ; and all began to dance before the victim of the goddess to the tune of wild incantations.

The king was a brave man. But, depressed by the fact that he had been taken unawares whilst sleeping, and had been deprived, at the same time, of his sword, without any chance of showing his mettle, his courage failed him completely. He realised that, not only was he completely helpless against these hordes of wild Bhils whose language was utterly unknown to him, and to whom he could make no protest, but, he was about to die a very cruel death.

He prepared himself, however, with an effort, to die as befitting a Kshatriya¹ and a king's son, and to meet his death, grimly, without whimpering.

Now, he regretted, greatly, his rash act in driving away his brave minister : for, he believed, and rightly too, that that minister would never have allowed him to be taken in his sleep, and both might have escaped, or, at least, died a warrior's death fighting. But regrets, he thought, were now useless.

He watched with wide-open eyes of horror and fastidious

¹ The second caste—the fighting one according to Manu's classification. The first caste—the kingly one—according to the Upanishads.

disgust the near approach of some evil-smelling Bhils who began to paste the sacrificial red powder and yellow saffron over his forehead, on the soles of his feet and the palms of his hands.

It was, at this point of pasting the powder on his palms, that the king saw them spring back in horror : for they had discovered that one of the king's fingers was missing from his left hand ; and as it was enjoined on them, by custom and tradition, to sacrifice only that which was without blemish to the goddess, they loosened him immediately, and fled from the spot in terror fully assured that the goddess would not easily forgive them the insult inflicted upon her ; and would, there and then, take some dire revenge on them for their lack of foresight and intelligence in this matter.

The king soon realised that the cause of their fear was his mutilated finger, and marvelled at the effect produced on them, so fortunate for him. His numbed limbs refused to work for a little time as he had been tied so tightly ; but he soon recovered and picking up his sword which the Bhils had left behind them in the hurry of their departure, he began to retrace his steps to the spot where he had last seen his minister. But, just then, that devoted minister who had been searching for him came in sight, walking towards him with every appearance of great anxiety writ heavily on his face.

The king ran to meet him, and the two embraced each other with tears of joy and relief in their eyes : and very soon the minister was made acquainted with all that had happened.

"Do you know, my dear and beloved uncle," said the king, "that you were, indeed, quite right about my finger ? But for the fact of my losing that finger, I should, even now, have been sacrificed, and have died in a very cruel

fashion, believe me. So you see this particular accident *did* happen for the best, and I was wrong in doubting you here. But, I am not sure, however, that everything has happened for the best in your case. All that has happened to me was due largely to my own fault. But you, your torn garments, the blood on your clothes, the scars of many thorns, all make me fear that you have had an unpleasant and an unnecessary ordeal hiding in that thorn bush. Surely *your* beneficent providence deserted you."

But the minister replied with a smile: "Not so, my nephew. Thank God, we are both saved. Do you not realise that for me, too, everything has happened for the best? In the end the numbers of those Bhils must have told against us. Had we been together both of us would have been dead or captured; and but for your driving me far away from you to hide in a thicket, where I could not see what had happened to you, I should, most certainly, have come to your rescue. The goddess needed a victim. You have lost a finger and you would have been discarded: but I am complete in limb, and when those Bhils would have discovered your defect, I should have, most certainly, been sacrificed in your stead. They would have believed, too, that added merit must accrue in so quickly pacifying their cruel and hungry goddess who, being deprived of her meal at the very moment of her eating, is, no doubt, at this moment causing them great uneasiness. To-day, your Majesty must rid this jungle of the altar and temple of this cruel goddess, and teach these foolish subjects of yours that the service of the cruel does, indeed, bring punishment, pain and fear."

Whilst the minister was talking, the king's attendants came into view. The freed horses returning to the main road had given the alarm, and several search parties

were even now scouring the jungle. The king ordered that certain parties should remain behind to round up the Bhils and bring them into the capital, and another party remain on guard near the place of the crude altar after demolishing both altar and idol.

The king and his minister then mounted their horses, and returned, without delay, to their capital.

The king, then, by beat of drum proclaimed that none should ever again question his minister's wisdom, or scoff at his belief in a beneficent Providence that ordained everything for the best.

XII

THE KING'S DAUGHTER

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THERE was once a king in Ayodhya who had a daughter so beautiful that the sight of her drove men to a longing so great that some of them grew demented, and some of them died. But this beautiful girl had, in the course of her short life—she was only sixteen—never been known to show any feeling for anyone, either for her parents, her attendants, or her friends; she was actively unkind to no one, but her neglect for other people and her appropriation of everything which conduced to her well-being savoured of utter callousness.

Yet, by reason of her beauty, none felt inclined to be angry or harsh with what would have been dealt with in a proper manner in one less beautiful.

Now, on the banks of a river near by, there dwelt a hermit famed for his austerities. The king was determined to consult this holy man about his daughter's behaviour and sent for him one day.

The old hermit, with his hair coiled on the top of his head, came in due course, and was treated with great respect and given a seat of honour.

The king then said: "Holy sage! I have sent for you because you are versed in the knowledge of the three worlds, and this concerns my only daughter."

The holy sage replied: "Women are in a world of their own."

The king answered: "For the present she intrudes upon ours"; and the hermit, smiling, bade him continue.

“Holy sage!” said the king. “From her very young age onwards, she has neither listened to her mother nor to me; but goes wilfully and inexorably her own way. She is, as you know, one of the most beautiful girls in the country, and men desire her; but she utterly refuses to marry, and she has great contempt for all those poor men who have tried to win her affections. Holy sage! Please look into the heart of this girl of mine, and find out the cause of this strange behaviour of hers, and the nature of the devil that molests her.

“She has everything that is possible for a person to have; her jewels are the pride of the whole world; the food that is given to her might make even a celestial being interested. She has one thousand and one maid-servants at her beck and call: she has ten thousand silken *saris* with bodices and skirts to match, and jewels of every planet, for every day, of every colour; still, she has not in her one spark of gratitude for all these gifts of the gods. She does what she likes, says what she likes, and she has not been known to care for the feelings of a single creature outside herself.

“Holy sage! My wife and I did untold penance to the god Indra to get this daughter; but having got her, we feel that the deprivation of a child was to us only one sorrow, whilst the acquisition of this girl is a thousand sorrows.

“Physically, she is perfect; our doctors say that her pulse neither increases nor decreases, whether you please her or displease her. I suspect that she has been born without that thing which makes us mortals happy or unhappy—a human heart.

“Holy sage! You have the power of looking into the past, the present, and the future. Do, therefore, I implore you, look into the past of this daughter of mine and

tell me the reason of her strange behaviour, and the remedy."

The hermit, listening carefully, sat for a while in a posture of meditation with closed eyes. He remained thus for some time, sunk in deep thought, before he spoke slowly: "Know, O great king, that when this universe was in its infancy, a number of great spirits other than man who is a compound of all the elements, occupied the world.

"They were, in appearance, as beautiful as this beautiful daughter of yours; but their predominating element was not of earth, but of water, and they had the qualities pertaining to that element: they were cold; nothing made any impression upon them; and by very reason of this cool, calm quality of theirs, they easily captured the hearts of the sons and daughters of the grosser element of earth. Now, amongst these spirits, there was one of very high rank, and he took to himself a wife of the earth, because she had all the characteristics of the great beings of her kind at that time: she was strong: whatever was told to her and asked to be kept secret was kept secret: and advice from any quarter made the required impression upon her. In short, she was the last person who should have been wedded to that vacillating, cold king of the water element.

"Now, it so happened that, one day, the gods from the upper heavens came down, as was their wont, to watch the sports of the mortals: and amongst them was the *apsaras* Asphodel; she was a very cunning and shrewd woman, and she, at once, noticed the subtle difference, both in appearance and in character, between the king of the water-spirits and his wife. This *apsaras* being of a mischievous disposition was determined to play a jest upon the wife of the water-king; and, as she was of the immortals, she was able to change her guise at will, and she determined

to turn herself into an old *sadhvi*,¹ and approach the queen with downcast face and ask for alms.

"The queen was by nature of a generous and of a charitable disposition, and all happened as Asphodel had desired; the queen bade her come in and take from her anything she desired as alms.

"In the twinkling of an eye, with that power which belongs to the immortals alone, the *apsaras* desired the queen's own form, and, by virtue of the queen's own word, and the *apsaras's* desire, the *apsaras* found herself the queen, and wished in the same breath that the queen become the *sadhvi*. The queen, unaware of her own metamorphosis, was about to call her maid-servants and dismiss the *apsaras* when Asphodel, reading her thoughts, herself called to the servants saying: 'Do you see this *sadhvi*?' "

"And they replied: 'Great queen, we do.'

"The pseudo-queen answered: 'She is not a real *sadhvi* at all; she has come here in disguise.'

"The real queen turning to her servants asked them quietly to bring her a change of clothes; but none heeded her, till Asphodel said quickly: 'Yes, give her a change of clothes, and tell her to go quickly, far, from my palace, and give her food too, but let her be gone and this speedily.'

"This was done and the wicked *apsaras* sat down to await for the night when the king of the water spirits would come to the apartments of his wife: for the heartless Asphodel had no care for anything, or of anybody, apart from her own desire.

"When the king came in the night to his wife, he was fascinated with her and a certain, new indefinable charm which he had not sensed before. He spent the night

¹ A wandering nun.

very happily with his pseudo-wife, talking to her as usual, but feeling greater happiness than he had ever before experienced in her company.

"He was, however, of the nature of water, and the time soon came when he grew tired of even Asphodel's superior charms.

"Indeed, he began to compare her, to her disadvantage, to the woman she once was, and wonder at the metamorphosis.

"He told her she was a far better person in those olden days when her virtues were more solid and her passions less flexible.

"The dignity of the *apsaras* was deeply hurt; moreover, her heart had, now, been given to the king of the water spirits, and she no longer desired to return to the celestial world, or be anywhere but near the water-king. She feared, also, that on her return to the heavens, her sin would be visible to her companions, and she might have to pass her life in a degraded position.

"In the meantime, the unfortunate queen who had been driven out of the palace in the guise of a wandering nun, wandered on and on and wondered why she no longer cognised her own identity.

"Sometimes she believed she was a queen—wife of the king of the water spirits—sometimes she was assured she was this poor old *sadbvi* whose body ached so wearily: yet, despite her aches, she was doubtful; and she realised that her memory could no longer help her, but only confuse her.

"She knew that somebody had come and changed her personality—an old *sadbvi* who had turned her out of the palace: she believed it must have been some wrong-doing of hers in a past birth, forgetting, that once, in some time, one of the parties must have been innocent.

“In the meantime, Asphodel grew more and more wretched, bound up as her affections were with her fickle lover ; but she was determined that she would remain to all intents and purposes his principal wife.

“She saw with agony that he wanted fresh things and had new desires at every turn, and she tolerated many rivals ; for a woman cannot hold a man unless she be virtuous, and the beautiful Asphodel had neither virtue nor the vestige of a conscience.

“Now the time was near when Asphodel was about to become a mother, and it was about this time that it was discovered in the celestial world that she was missing.

“The king of the celestials ordered that a search should be made for her, and an enquiry be set up as to why she had left the celestial world without the royal permission.

“Asphodel had no desire of ever returning to the celestial world and she bewildered her pursuers, for awhile, by her magic.

“But it was soon discovered that she was in the world of mortals playing the part of the wife of a water-king ; her ill-doing was also recounted to the king of the gods who was deeply angered.

“The great Indra ordered that she should be dragged back to her place in the heavens, but be degraded from her post of one of the chief dancers to the serving class ; and a part of her magic power be taken from her to teach her, in future, not to get herself mixed up with the affairs of the mortals :

“‘And for the child,’ the great Indra said : ‘there is a pair of foolish mortals in the world who have been clamouring for one ; they pester me night and day with their prayers. So take this unwanted child and give it to them and let the wife of that king bring it forth in fleshly form. O King ! This daughter of the king of

water and a spirit of the air is thy unmanageable daughter—true daughter of the deluded woman from the celestial region, but thou believest her to be thine by virtue of the fact that you have produced her body.”

The king and queen were silent; but the queen who had a kind heart enquired: “What happened to the poor queen?”

The Rishi replied gravely: “She is still wandering in the guise of a *sadbvi*, sometimes she believes she is a queen, sometimes she thinks she is a *sadbvi*; and her fate will end only if the drama in which she lost her identity be set exactly the same, and that may occur soon or after millions of years, or—never.”

The queen remained silent; but the king said somewhat impatiently: “What shall we do about the daughter, great sage?”

The Rishi replied: “O King! This is another question. You asked me to look into the past and read the reason of her behaviour. I have done that successfully. She is not actively unkind because she has been in contact with both of you, more with the queen whose kindness of heart is proverbial, and this—to some extent—has neutralised the power and desire to do mischief which your daughter has inherited from her real mother.

“I shall meditate and find out a solution by which your daughter will learn the lesson of life.”

Thus saying, the old hermit rose, and left the court, the king and queen both rising to do him honour.

The next morning the father and mother of the princess awaited his coming anxiously, and when the news came that the hermit was in sight, the king left his throne and went eagerly to receive him at the very door of his durbars-hall.

The hermit sat down and bidding them be seated as

well, said : " Your daughter will develop a human heart and cease to be a burden to anyone after she has been married."

At that, both the king and queen exclaimed together : " Married ! "

Then the king said : " Oh ! Holy sage ! You do not know ; many are the eligible and handsome young men who for the love of this daughter of mine, have become monks or renounced the body. She is cursed by all the mothers of eligible sons for the havoc she has played with them, leading them on only to laugh them to scorn at last. Married ! I would to God she would get married."

The hermit said, mildly : " My son ! You have mistaken my meaning. Not for this daughter of yours is a handsome young man who is devoted exclusively to her and her whims. Put her in contact with the king of Sitapur who is your vassel and bound to do your wishes. He is devoted to his present wife, and, even if you give him twenty more, he will remain devoted to her ; for that wife has been his wife for many births. Your daughter is the kind who will want only the man who does not want her, and that man alone can keep her in subjugation. In her love for the king of Sitapur which will be engendered by his utter want of desire for her, your daughter will suffer—and from suffering will come to her, at last,—a human heart."

XIII

THE BASHFUL GODDESS (A LEGEND WITH A MORAL)

XIII. THE BASHFUL GODDESS

(A LEGEND AND A MORAL)

ONCE, when Mahadeva with Parvati in his arms was passing the temple of Chidambaram in Southern India, he heard his name recited in loud and resounding tones, and became curious to see these devotees of his. So, donning the invisible mantle of the gods, both alighted in the inner courtyard of the temple to listen, unobserved, to the plaudits of the multitude, and discover the reason of this unusual display of devotion.

The temple shone golden as the sun at midday, and in all its one thousand and eight niches they saw an idol of Shiva carved in a thousand and eight different postures. These, Parvati especially examined with great interest. There was not lacking a single posture known to man, but none appeared to the wife of the great god as particularly attractive; though she conceded the grace of the whirl of Nataraja.¹

"Surely, my lord," she said at last, "they have not made you lord of the dance."

But, Mahadeva smiled at her pouting and said: "Why not? The dance is a symbol of joy, and the gods are glad to see the mortals joyful": and he bade her listen to what a priest, in describing the one thousand and eight idols, was saying. "These dances," said the priest, "were taught to the mortals by the great god himself, and I shall tell you how it all happened."

¹ Lit. : Lord of the dance.

Parvati was impatient, but her lord bade her restrain her feelings, and listen.

"One day," said the priest, "the great god, waking from his meditation, was surprised at the unusual silence in the ether, and thought, uneasily, that the mortals were now so satisfied with themselves that they had ceased from praising him, or asking of him boons. Though the great god thought it might prove a very fortunate thing for himself, enabling him to continue his meditation undisturbed, Parvati, his wife, who like all women wanted her husband to be predominant in all the universes, grew dissatisfied at her lord's complaisance, fearing that praises of Vishnu were being sung in preference to those of Shiva and seeing in this a direct insult to herself."

("Be patient, my beloved," said the great god pacifying the indignant Parvati, "and let us listen.")

"The daughter of the Himalayas," said the priest, "feared, also, that Laxmi, the wife of Vishnu, might grow unduly elated, and no woman likes to see another glorying at her expense; so the beautiful Uma insisted that Mahadeva should restore the balance, if only for her sake, and remain in very truth the greatest of gods.

"Mahadeva," went on the priest, "replying mildly to his angry spouse, said: 'my love, the goddess of wealth (Laxmi) can never hope to compete with you, the embodiment of all that is womanly, either in her virtue or in her beauty. The goddess of wealth,' he reminded her, 'resides in the house of anyone to whom she has taken even a passing fancy; she is nearly always with kings, less occasionally with a priest, and then only with a bad one; she even stoops to reside in the house of some portly merchant of the town, though,' he agreed, 'in that house she is more like a mother, to be protected with

care, than, something to be enjoyed, like the beloved who gives happiness. She deigns but rarely to lavish her favours on a writer or poet, though when she does Vishnu himself might well fear for his laurels. You, dear one, are a true *sati*¹ and the world knows this well. How, then, can you be so foolish as to be even passingly jealous of poor Laxmi ?’

“But Parvati” said the priest “was obdurate in this matter: ‘It is not fair,’ she said resuming the original argument, ‘that Vishnu should get praises intended for you, my lord!’

“Mahadeva said: ‘Well, I shall go round and see Vishnu.’

“So he left Parvati on the snowy mountains, and came to Vaikuntha—the home of Vishnu and his consort Laxmi.

“He found them, as usual, playing their favourite game of dice, and totalling up who was the greatest winner, and who the loser.

“The goddess of wealth always won from the god of virtue; and they were both laughing, very heartily, at this anomaly when Mahadeva entered.

“They rose to receive him and he sat beside them and enquired: ‘Have you been pestered more than usual by the mortals of the world?’

“‘No,’ said Vishnu pleasantly, ‘on the contrary, we have had a pleasurable respite from the nuisance; we have not heard of late the sound of a single bell.’

“Then Mahadeva, pondering the reason, discovered that the people of Chidambaram were engrossed in a new religion where neither himself nor Vishnu appeared to have a place.

“This was worse than ever.

¹ A chaste woman who has loved only one man in her existence.

“ ‘Come along, Vishnu,’ said Mahadeva, ‘let us go and see who is the object of the new worship, and try to reconvert our old admirers for the joy of our women-folk.’ ”

“ So the great god Shiva and Vishnu, in the disguise of yogis, smeared with ashes, presented themselves in the centre of the courtyard of the great temple ; and the heretical prophets of the new religion seeing them, and, knowing by their magical power who they were, set up powerful incantations, and brought into being a great tiger which rushed with gaping jaws at the gods. But the ‘moon-crested one’¹ caught it and flung it around his shoulders where it hangs to this day.

“ Then the priests of the temple calling frantically upon their demons—for these were the objects of their new devotion—produced a frothing snake of evil which ran to bite them ; but, this, too, Mahadeva lifted up, and wreathed it round his neck where it still remains, writhing but impotent.

“ The priests, then, with their last and mightiest effort, brought into being the furious goblin of lust which hurled itself towards them : but Mahadeva leaped upon it, and it lies for all time under his feet.

“ Then the lord of the dance (Nataraja) began to dance upon the body of the goblin, and all the people were wonderstruck at the wild, mad beautiful dance. Then it dawned upon them that the dancer was the great god himself, and the assembled people thereupon began to cry out with one voice : ‘*Har, Har, Mahadeva*’—Victory to the great god—till the skies were rent with the sound ; and the queen Parvati, asleep in the heart of the snowy mountains, woke up hearing the noise, and knew the mortals had thrown out their demons, and were once more

¹ A name of Shiva.

occupied in the praises of her husband, and she was greatly pleased.

"Then, Mahadeva returned happily to where Parvati lay sleeping, knowing full well that she was already cognisant of the fact that his name had again returned to the lips of the mortals.

"But the king of the serpents who, himself, was a great dancer, hearing of this wonderful dance of Nataraja was anxious to see its wonder for himself,

"So he propitiated Mahadeva by great austerities and came at last to the mountains where Mahadeva was seated on a golden throne with Parvati on his left thigh, and the elephant-god¹ on his right.

"The king of the snakes, whose name was Sesha-Naga said: 'Oh! Mahadeva! Please let me see that wonderful dance of yours by which the false priests of Chidambaram worshipping devils lost their power over the multitude who no longer listen to them, nor care for their incantations, but have resumed the pure worship which consists of the praises of the gods.'

"Mahadeva said to the king of the snakes: 'Very willingly shall I show you my dance. Come along with me: we shall go to that very Chidambaram, and I shall again dance there, both for your edification and, that, of those who praise me.'

"Thus saying, Mahadeva and the king of the serpents flew up in the air and came down in the self-same place in the large court-yard at Chidambaram where Shiva had danced before. Now there are four halls in Chidambaram, and one of them was exclusively devoted to the lore of dancing.

¹ Ganpat—the god of good fortune—this is supposed to be the son of Parvati made from the wax from her ear. Mahadeva, seeing him in his mother's apartments struck off his head with a sword which, by the force of the mighty god's arm, was lost for ever, and, later, Shiva, remorseful at his false jealousy, replaced it by that of an elephant.

"And in this hall of dancing the goddess Kali had installed herself; and was in no mood to receive the great god; nor did she desire that he should oust her from her place in the temple.

"She was determined not to go away easily; and, as a preliminary to her refusal, forbade the great god the use of her dancing hall.

"She assured him and everyone else that there was nothing in the way of dancing that the great god could do, which she herself could not do as well, if not better.

"Mahadeva accepted her challenge, and they began to dance in competition; with Sesh-Nag—the king of the serpents—as judge, and the whole congregation as witnesses.

"The stake was to be the undisputed occupancy of the hall for the victor, for all time.

"There, then, took place an exhibition of dancing more wonderful than any that had been seen before in any of the worlds: the great god versus the goddess Kali.

"Many new dances were invented that day, some resembling the movements of a scorpion, a swan, an intoxicated man, a creeping elephant, a deer in flight, a cradle swinging, a peacock dancing, the threading of a needle, the flying of a kite, an elephant playing: others, a whirl-pool, a *swastika*, a spinning-lotus; movements that had never before been performed by either god or human being.

"But, in every dance, however original, the goddess emulated Shiva; indeed, she did better, for, she had the added grace natural to woman. So Shiva and Kali danced throughout the night with no benefit to Mahadeva till he vanquished her by a trick. He danced on one leg with

the other flung high above his head; and the goddess was too bashful to imitate this posture with so many people looking on; so she allowed Mahadeva the victory and went to reside in another temple outside the city.¹

"In this manner did the great god fully regain his hold and power over the people of Chidambaram.

"For, at the defeat of Kali, all the people shouted again: '*Har, Har, Mahadeva*'; and the sound reverberated throughout the corridors, in and out the thousand pillars."

Listening to this story of the priest, the real Parvati was greatly displeased and said: "My lord! Expunge this story from the memories of these men, and punish the man who invented it."

But, the great god, smiling tenderly, said: "Not so, my dear, let it remain, and rather let us bless these simple mortals. You should not be so angry with these poor creatures: for if they could conceive us in our real grandeur and nobility, then they would be even as we are, and no less.

"How can the small depict rightly the great!

"These mortals, dear lady, mean us no disrespect by their absurd stories. They have merely invested us with their own qualities, and they make us play in the dramas conceived by their own mediocre brains. They give us the parts that they themselves, in similar circumstances, would play, and they worship themselves in various forms. So let us leave them to their dancing and their songs.

"Where the gods cannot bless, they should never curse; for the very lack of our blessing is more than sufficient punishment."

And Parvati who was the essence of kindness and compassion agreed and blessed them after all; for she said as she left: "At least they call on your honoured

¹ Even to-day, the temple of Kali is outside the city, in memory of this dance.

name : so let the dance hall be used for a better purpose than mere dancing.”

And, to-day, Chidambaram is a seat of learning, and the professors of to-day are not addicted to dancing.

XIV

THE STRANGE TALE OF HIRASURI
(A 16TH CENTURY BIOGRAPHY)

XIV. THE STRANGE TALE OF HIRASURI

(A 16TH CENTURY BIOGRAPHY)

OBEISANCE to the *Guru*.

An account of Hirsurishavarji is now being written. He was born in Palanpur, in Samvat 1583, on the 8th day of the bright half of Margashirsha, and was initiated on the 2nd day of the dark half of Kartik, in Samvat 1596, and soon, by the grace of Shri Rishabhdev,¹ gained the title of Pundit ² in the year 1603, in the town of Shri Mamulai.

On the 5th day of the bright half of Magh, in the year 1608, by the grace of Paishwanath ³ and Nemnath ³ he became a reader in Naiadpura ; he attained the title of *Suri* in the town of Sirohi in Samvat, 1610.

Who can describe the merits of this great man when Brihaspati ⁴ himself would be unable to write fully of his magnanimity ?

Hirasuri installed the idol of Shri Kanthunak in Sirohi. He, also, established many Jain idols in Naradpuri.

In Ahmedabad, Seth Meghji himself, the chief amongst his followers, anticipating the *guru's* wish, was initiated with 25 others into the monkhood with great pomp and amidst the sound of musical instruments, after taking the required permission from the Emperor Akbar ; and they were all ready to serve the lotus-like feet of Shri Hirasuri.

¹ A Jain Tirthankar

² A learned man.

³ Other Jain Tirthankars

⁴ The Guru of the gods, the Lord of Speech, the title given to a perfect Pundit.

Now we write about the circumstances which brought about the meeting of Hirsuriji and the Emperor Akbar.

Ahmedabad is the capital of the 17,000 villages of Gujarat.

In Gujarat there is a port named Gandhar; and in it, there lives a very rich Shravak¹ named Ramji. He, hearing the fame of Hirsuriji in Gandhar, thought of inviting him to Gandharia, and wrote a letter of request thus: "O Swamiji, please come to Gandhar, and stay there for the four months of the rainy season."² Hirsuriji consented and started walking to Ahmedabad.³ He spent three months on the way, but came near Gandhar before the fourth monsoon had set in, and sent a messenger, with the news of his arrival, to Ramji Gandhariji who was transported with joy; and filled the mouth of the messenger with pearls. He, then, flung before him the keys of his 500 store-houses, saying: "In return⁴ for the good news you have brought me, take any of these keys, and all the goods in the store-house to which it belongs shall be yours; choose whatever key you fancy."

The messenger picking up the largest key of all, chose that and the merchant, observing this, said: "O good man, why do you take that particular key? Take another instead."

The messenger believed that the merchant's asking him not to take the largest key of all meant that the store-house to which it fitted contained more goods, and, with this thought in his mind, the messenger insisted that he

¹ Lay disciple.

² All Jain monks have to spend the rainy season in one place. Several reasons are given, the principal one being that injury is done, by their travelling, to green growing grass, and to insects that are in abundance during the rains. One suspects, however, expediency is also one of the reasons.

³ The journey on foot, subtracting 12 months of the rainy season, must have taken a little over two years. Jain monks are not allowed to travel in any conveyance. (See the Writer's *The India that is India.*)

⁴ It is the custom in India to reward well the bearer of good news.

had made his choice. So the merchant gave him the key, and told him to take the goods in the store-house to which it belonged, as a present. The clerk of the merchant then opened the store-house in the presence of the messenger. But a man gets only what is written in his forehead: and the messenger, looking into the store-house, saw it contained the ropes, anchors and cables of 500 ships belonging to the merchant.

Seeing the messenger's discomfiture, the merchant thought in his mind: "What will this poor man do with these?" So he ordered his clerk to fix the price of them and pay that amount of money to the messenger.

The clerk, then, had the price of the goods ascertained in the market: it came to eleven lakhs fifty-two thousand silver pieces; this sum was duly given to the messenger.

Then Ramji Gandhari assembled the whole community of Jains, and ordered that the whole town be decorated. The town and market-places were white-washed; the roads watered; houses, temples, windows and balconies were hung with rich cloths.

The houses were adorned with flags and bunting. Then well-dressed boys were mounted on richly comparisoned horses, and a hundred and eight very beautiful ladies were made ready in their best dresses with vessels of water on their heads.¹ Elephants, horses, chariots, palanquins, musicians, all were made ready, after being decorated. Then, taking with him musicians playing on thirty-six kinds of musical instruments, drums, tabors, cymbals, pipes, guitar, etc., the Seth threw money to the crowds, whilst the bards and minstrels chanted his praises, and the hearts of lakhs of people grew delighted and merry songs were sung.

¹ These are all counted highly auspicious sights, the poorest house in India can always send a maiden, or a woman with her husband living, with water-pot to greet honoured guest or relative, Seth Ramji has left no auspicious act unperformed.

In this manner, Sethji Ramji Gandhari came in procession, with great pomp, to where the *guru* was ; and bowing to Shri Hirsuriji preserving due decorum, went round him thrice and prostrated before him twelve times.

By this act of merit Gandhari acquired the fruit of his life.¹

He escorted Shri Hirsuriji to the hermitage, going through the centre of the market, distributing alms to the poor along the route.

At the hermitage, Ramji Gandhari distributed golden *mohurs*, and, seeing this generosity, even the spectators of other religions grew astonished and began to praise the Jain religion.

Shri Hirsuriji remained there for the four months of the rainy season, the merchant performing many religious rites.

At this time Shri Thansen and Todermall were ministers of the Emperor Akbar. They were, at that time, in the city of Agra, having come there for the spring festivities.

Now Champakbai, an aunt of Thansen's,² wished to observe a religious fast for six months.

So aunt Champakbai secured the permission of Thansen and Todermall to take this vow in the name of her *guru*. Having done this, she set out for her home in a procession, escorted by musicians playing on their several instruments.

Champakbai is sitting in a palanquin.³ Seeing Thansen and Todermall walking bare-footed in front of the palanquin, the emperor who was watching the procession from a balcony said to his courtiers : "O Friends ! Look

¹ Salvation.

² This relationship of Thansen has been recorded here to explain a relationship which is recorded later. Champakbai, to enter thus, unIntroduced, seems to have been a well-known character of that time.

³ The tenses are left in the form of the original manuscript.

at this! What sort of Hindu religion is this where the men go bare-footed before the women! Go and call Thansen here." The attendant of the emperor obeyed him instantly and coming to Thansen said: "His Majesty the Emperor calls you at once."

Hearing this, Thansen went immediately to the emperor, and, having made his obeisances, stood in a posture of humility, awaiting the royal commands.

The emperor said: "What is this, Thansen? You, my minister, to walk bare-footed before a woman, and thus lower my prestige! What is this disgraceful religion of yours?"

Thansen, at once, replied: "Salutations to you O worshipful emperor! This lady is my aunt, the sister of my father, and she has shown great courage: for she has taken a vow to fast in this month of Jeth."

The emperor replied: "What is there in that? If she does not dine by day she dines at night; our fakirs observe similar fasts."

Then Thansen spoke: "O Commander of all Salamat! Our fasts are not like these. In our fasts we eat nothing either by day or by night. If one becomes very thirsty, one is permitted to drink water which has been made cool after boiling,¹ but that, too, only by day, and nothing else can be eaten. Moreover, my aunt has taken the vow of fasting thus for six months."

Then the emperor said: "O foolish Thansen! What do you say? How can she live without food for so long a time! I shall only believe this possible if you keep her in my palace for the six months of her fast. I shall treat her very well; but she will only be given water to drink and nothing to eat. I shall consider your aunt as my own aunt; so now go and bring her to my palace."

¹ No Jain will drink water except it has been boiled.

Then Thansen brought Champakbai to the palace.

The emperor enjoined on his queen and attendants to consider her as their aunt, and to serve her well; but to allow her only water that had been boiled and then cooled to drink; and said that if any fruit or sweets came to her, they should inform him immediately of the fact.

The emperor gave instructions similar to these to every member of his staff and to all his queens, and, having done so, went into his chamber of audience.

In this way, the first month passed; then, the second, the third, the fourth, and the fifth month, the emperor enquiring about Champakbai daily. The sixth month was also about to come to a close, when, as it was the 4th day of the bright half of the month of Bhadrava,¹ Thansen came before the emperor to ask permission, in the name of his aunt, for her to go to the temple, saying: "O great Emperor! There remains now one day more for my aunt to fast: she has now completed her vow to fast for six months. So, if your Majesty permits her, she will to-day go to bow to the gods in the temple, and to the picture of her *guru*. She will, also, hear the religious books read in the temple, and after feasting all the men of our caste, will break her fast."

After Thansen had finished speaking, the emperor called his queens and attendants and earnestly enquired from them if Thansen's aunt had really fasted for six months.

"What did she eat during that time?" he insisted. "Tell me the truth."

Then the queen said: "O Hazrat! We have only seen her drinking hot water; we have not seen her taking anything else."

Hearing this, the emperor was wonder-struck, and going to Champakbai began to question her: "O aunt!

¹ A holiday amongst Jains.

You have fasted for six months. By what power did you do that ? ”

Then Champakbai spoke : “ I observed the fast by the grace of my *gurudeva*, and kept it by his power.”

Then the emperor said : “ Your gods are but idols of stones, I know that ; but I do not know your *guru*. Tell me who he is, and where he lives.”

Champakbai said : “ I observed the fast by the power of my *guru* Hirsuri. In the city of Khambhat (Cambay) near Gujarat, there is the town of Gandhar ; and a merchant named Ramji Gandhari lives in that town. That Ramji has kept my *guru* in his own town after many humble and persistent requests to the *guru*. O Emperor ! I have completed these fasts by the grace of *guru* Hirsuri.”

Hearing this, the emperor loaded Champakbai with gifts and then permitted her to leave the palace.

The emperor pondered in his mind : “ What sort of man is this *guru*, who exercises his power sitting in Gandhar in Gujarat ; and, by this power, this lady fasts for six months ? It will be good to see this man.”

Thus thinking, the emperor sent an order to the viceroy of Gujarat couched in these terms : “ The principal man amongst monks named Hirvijayasuri is there in Gandhar near Cambay. Tell him, with due courtesy, that the emperor thinks of him very much ¹ and requests him to come to Agra. You may take whatever expenses he wants for this journey ; but send him here as soon as you read this letter.”

The viceroy of Ahmedabad read the letter, and sent it to the viceroy of Cambay, and the viceroy of Cambay sent it to Gandhar.

¹ This is a colloquialism indicating respect, used instead of the vulgar “ is calling you, or commanding you to come to him—.”

While Ramji Gandhari with the *mahajan*¹ was listening to Hirguruji expounding the scriptures, the message of the emperor came there.

Having read the letter, it became apparent that the Emperor Akbar himself had sent for Hirguruji, and hearing this, Ramji Gandhari went to Cambay, and taking the *mahajan* of that place with him he went to Ahmedabad; and with the *mahajan* of Ahmedabad, he went to the clerk and messenger of the emperor; and giving him many presents and gifts and placating him with bribes, they sent with him an appeal to the emperor. The messenger then returned to the emperor with their message; and gave it to the emperor, and it was read by the Dewan. The emperor then demanded from the messenger an explanation as to why the *guru* did not come, and conjured him to tell the truth.

The messenger replied: "O Hazrat! Your Majesty, Hirguru is in Gandhar. I went to fetch him there, so I saw him; he is very ill. If he recovers from the illness and is all right, the viceroy of Gujarat will send word to him, and the viceroy will send him here." Hearing these words, the emperor believed the messenger to have spoken truly.

Now, the emperor has a lamp with four receptacles shaped like wings; the manner of its coming into the possession of the emperor is a wonderful story, worthy of narration, and we shall tell it first.

An oil merchant lives in Delhi.

In the rainy season, owing to the heavy rains, an old wall of his house fell down; and while the oil merchant was digging into the foundation of the fallen house, he found a lamp with four burners. As it was of a very good shape, the oil merchant scrubbed and polished it, and he was delighted to see it; and, when it was evening,

¹ Chief men of the Jains.

he filled the vessel with oil and lighted the lamp on all the four sides.

At that time, he saw four dervishes standing there. Seeing them, the oil merchant grew afraid, and asked them who they were, and the four dervishes replied : " We are the slaves of this lamp ; we shall be present here as long as this lamp burns. There are letters written in the four sides of the lamp, so we are the slaves of the lamp. We shall do whatever we are ordered to do by the person who lights this lamp."

So the oil merchant wished that they should take him to the palace of the emperor, and show him his bedroom and other rooms.

The dervishes lifted him up and showed him the whole palace. They, then, brought him to the place where the bed of the emperor was, and the oil merchant stood in wonder. There was a thick mattress on the bed, and it was embroidered with various kinds of flowers to the height of one and a quarter span of the hand : on the mattress was scattered a fine powder of musk, camphor and amber, the fragrance of which spread all about the place. Near the bed, some sweet-smelling incense was burning and the room was filled with fragrant smoke. Lights were also lighted. Seeing all this, the oil merchant grew delighted in his mind, and thought : " Let me experience the delight of sleeping in this bed of the emperor."

With this thought in his mind, he sat on the bed of the emperor, and thinking to take only a short nap, he stretched himself out, and, lulled by the softness of the bed, and the surrounding fragrance, he fell into a sound sleep.

Now, the oil in the lamp at his house was exhausted ; and when it was burnt up, the lamp was extinguished of its own accord.

When the lamp was out, the genii disappeared and went to their own places.

The emperor Akbar came to his bed, and was greatly surprised to see a person in dirty clothes : terribly black like the devil himself : as oily as Hanuman, the monkey-god ; and as strong and stout as a *Bhairva*,¹ in his bedroom, asleep in his bed ; and he wondered how he had managed to come there.

Thinking that he should be carefully secured, the emperor ordered the bed to be removed into another room. The doors of that room were closed and strongly locked, and the key was kept with the emperor himself.

When it was morning, the emperor unlocked the door of that room with his own hands, and found the oil merchant still sound asleep.

The emperor then roused him from his sleep, and asked of him : " Who are you ? How did you get into the zenana ? Tell the truth, and be careful how you lie to me."

The oil merchant said : " I am telling you the truth, O emperor ! Listen to what I tell you. The wall of my house fell down owing to the rains, and, whilst I was digging down into its foundations, I discovered a lamp with four receptacles for oil. Having polished the lamp, I filled it with oil and lighted four wicks. Instantaneously, I saw four dervishes standing there. I was terrified, but the *oliyas*² said : ' Why are you terrified ? As long as the wicks burn we shall stand here, and do your bidding. We shall do whatever you command us to do.'

" Hearing these words, a thought occurred to me.

" I said to them : ' If you really wish to do my bidding, then show me the whole palace of the emperor.' Then those *oliyas*² took me up and brought me here. After

¹ A supernatural being, devoid of fear.

² Dervishes.

seeing the whole palace, I wished to take a nap, and, while lying in the bed, I fell fast asleep. I was only roused from this sleep by your Majesty himself, and now I stand before your Majesty. Give me whatever punishment you like."

Then the emperor said angrily : " Bring me that lamp, by the power of which you say you came here."

The oil merchant stood up, and the emperor sent a servant with him to his home. The oil merchant duly returned with the servant, and placed the lamp before the emperor. The emperor was delighted to see the lamp ; then he ordered the oil merchant to be bathed with hot water, and be given good clothes to wear, and sweet things to eat ; but not be permitted to leave the palace.

When it was evening the emperor called the oil merchant into a private room, and the emperor placed the oil in the four receptacles, and lighted the four wicks on the four sides, and, immediately, four dervishes came and stood there. The emperor was afraid to see them ; but thought in his mind that the oil merchant had really told him the truth, and he was much pleased with him ; but kept the four dervishes as his own slaves.

Then the emperor gave great honour and costly presents to the oil merchant, and conferred upon him the mayoralty of the city of Delhi.

Now the emperor hearing about Hirasuri's illness decided to call the *oliyas*, and enquire from them when he would be well enough to come to Delhi.

He said : " There is a monk called Hirguruji in Gandhar, near Cambay, in Gujarat. How is his health ? "

Then the dervishes replied : " Hirguruji is quite healthy, and has no disease. He is a very powerful saint and a great devotee of God. He does not like to come here.

So Ramji Gandhari bribed everyone, and sent you a false letter."

Hearing this, the emperor became extremely angry, and in the morning wrote an urgent order: "I do not know why you write false letters, and take bribes. You will be undone, O Viceroy, unless you send Hirguru here at once; if you do not send him here, I shall ruin Gujarat."

He sent this letter to Gujarat.

So the viceroy of Gujarat insisted on the Council of Gandhar to send Hirguru at once.

On the receipt of this new order Ramji was unable to do anything further.

So Hirvijayasuri, establishing his chief disciple Vijaya-sensuri in his place, came to Cambay with five hundred men in great pomp. Travelling on foot, he came to Ahmedabad. The Jain citizens received him, and led him in procession to the hermitage there; from Ahmedabad he went to Sarotar, through Mehsana, Siddhpur, and then to Palanpur.

At that time Pajjusan¹ had set in; and according to the rules of his order, the Jains asked him to stay there for the rainy season till the month of Kartik.

Hirguru, replying, said that the emperor appeared in an angry mood, and as he had to live in the territory under him, he did not wish to be harassed, which might happen if he did not act according to the emperor's orders, and said that he must continue his journey.

At that time, the Jain citizens petitioned the Bhil king of Palli that though Hirguru would not stay by their request, he might stay if requested by the powerful king of Palli. So the king of Palli went to Hirguru and, bowing before him said: "Of whom are you afraid?"

¹ The sacred days of the Jains are four in the Indian month of Shravana, and four in the Bhadharva month; the last day of Shravana and the first of Bhadharva is Pajjusan: this year it fell on the 7th and 8th of September.

The *guruji* replied: "The emperor of Delhi has sent for us; it would not be proper for us not to go, so we have to go."

The king of Palli said: "Have no fear from that fellow; if he comes here, we shall teach him a salutary lesson, and we shall not let you go in the rainy season."

So Hirguru agreed to stay in Palanpur till Samvatsari.

The whole *sangh*¹ (community) was delighted. In the Pajjusan many religious austerities were performed: there were fasts on the sixth day, the eighth day and the tenth day and alms were distributed to beggars, and a great impetus was given to religion. The worship in the temples was performed with added pomp and more careful ritual; and love for God's laws increased.

Having broken his fast on the day following Samvatsari, the saint, left Palanpur, and travelling in stages, came twenty-four miles from Delhi where word was sent to Thansen and Todermall.

Hearing that Hirguruji was but twenty-four miles away, the emperor was greatly elated.

He gave an order that elephants, horses, drums, the whole of his army, and anything else that the Jains might require, should take part in the procession that was to receive the *guruji*.

So Thansen and Todermall went with great pomp in a grand procession, and made obeisance to Hirguruji with due ceremony, and Hirguruji gave them his blessings, but could not resist saying: "When you two are ministers of the emperor, in your ministry above all, is it right we have to come here, over six hundred miles, in the rainy season? All honour to you and your administration for that!"

Thansen replied: "We could not do anything against

¹ The "sangh" is composed of monks and nuns, and lay disciples of both sexes.

the emperor's will, though we exercised our wits to the utmost; for the emperor knows everything. He consults four dervishes, and we are helpless. But the result of your coming here will be good, and the glory of the Jain religion will increase; so have no anxiety on that score.

Then Hirguruji, at an auspicious hour, was taken with great pomp, in procession, through the city, to the playing of music; coins were freely distributed. He came into the hermitage where the Jain women were singing songs of welcome, and took his place on a raised seat.

The wife of the principal merchant of the town welcomed him with an offering of pearls.¹ And the men of the city took their allotted seats. Then the *guruji* delivered a sermon for the good of those assembled. He blessed them first: "May Parshwadeva who is like a creeper that gives food, who is like the sun that dispels darkness, who is like the tree that grants all desire, who is like a ship in the ocean of this world, who is the source of all prosperity, be for your welfare!" Then he bade them worship the *Jinendra*, worship the Teacher, have mercy towards all animals, have charity towards the deserving, and cultivate love for good deeds, and the hearing of the scriptures. These, he said, were the fruits of the tree in the form of human life.

Drinking in the nectar of his words, those assembled were made happy. They dispersed to their homes, and the whole community soon became one in their devotion to the *guru*.

Thansen, taking leave of the *guru*, went to the emperor, and, making due obeisance, stood before him. The emperor duly enquired about Hirguru and asked Thansen

¹ Strangely enough, considering their principles of harmlessness to every living creature, even Jain monks use rosaries of pearls.

to bring him to the palace the very next day. Thansen then went home; and, the next day, requested Hirgurugi to come to the palace, for the emperor wished to see him, and had expressed his desire in the following manner: "Thansen, you have seen Hirguru. I, too, would be pure by seeing him. Tell him that."

In accordance with the emperor's desire Hirguru went to his court, accompanied by Thansen and others, with several holy men. At the time of his entering the court, the emperor came down from his throne to receive him, and, bowing before him, bade him come nearer.

But Hirguru said: "We shall remain at this very place, for it is not proper for us to come further."

The emperor asked him why he came no further. Hirguru replied: "This carpet must have been spread here for many days; and there may be some ants and other insects under it, and if we step on the carpet these insects will be troubled, and we shall have to answer for their trouble to God. We shall not come on the carpet."

The emperor said: "The floor of my palace is inlaid with pearls and diamonds, and the walls are of gold. How then is it possible for insects to come into a place like this?"

The emperor then ordered his servants to lift the carpet up, and show him the floor beneath. The servants came up, ready to remove the carpet, when Hirvijayasuri looked at Maldeva¹ who was sitting just behind him. Maldeva called upon the *guru* to look to this test of his truthfulness.

When the carpet was removed, there were innumerable layers of the larvae of ants and other insects. All the assembled people, as well as the emperor, were astonished at the sight. The emperor said in his heart: "Ah!

¹ Maldeva appears to be the favourite pupil who, later, works miracles in his *guru's* name.

Allah ! Whence have so many insects come in this place ? So Hirguru was right ! ”

The emperor, himself, then came near to Hirguru and said : “ Oh ! Hirguru, you are right. I see you are even as I have heard of you. ”

He prostrated himself before the holy man ; after which, Hirsuriji returned to the hermitage.

At that time, there was, in Delhi, a fakir of Malani named Makanshah who was a great miracle-worker. The emperor had given him the title of Jagatguru,¹ and he was the *guru* of the emperor himself. On hearing the name of Hirguru, he came to the emperor, and said : “ Call Hirguru, I should like to see his powers. ”

So the next day, Hirguru again came to the court at the call of the emperor.

The fakir then spoke : “ You call yourself Hirguru, the pearl amongst teachers, so show me your mystical power, or change your name. ”

At that time Antevasi Jagmal spoke : “ Oh ! Sai ! *Syed* ! What are you saying ? We know many powerful and mysterious secrets : but first show us what you can do, and then we shall show you our powers. ”

Then the fakir sent his cap flying into the sky ; and at the same time Jagmal repeating some *mantras* on his whisk² sent it into the sky after the fakir's cap ; it brought it down, and gave it a thrashing.

The emperor with the men of his court and even the fakir himself, was greatly surprised. The emperor said : “ Oh ! Makanshah, your cap has indeed been well beaten, so bow to the pearl of teachers. ”

Then, Makanshah took up a mysterious quilt, and

¹ World-teacher.

² All Jain monks have this whisk ; for it is imperative that they sweep the ground before they seat themselves, for the same reason that prevented Hirsuri from going on to the emperor's carpet.

threw it into the compound and defied anyone to lift up that quilt.

Then the emperor's elephant called Mahari was set free; he tried to pull the quilt, but could not even move it, let alone lift it from the ground. Then the emperor said: "If you ask Hircuru he will lift it up, I am sure."

Hearing this, Maldeva spoke: "I will lift it in any manner your majesty orders."

At that time, the emperor had in his hand a thin stick on which a bouquet of flowers was woven.

The emperor gave that stick to Maldeva and said: "Lift it with this."

Immediately, by the power of Vcer,¹ the blanket lifted itself up so forcibly that it fell into the river Jamna.

The fakir looked down discomfited, to find that even here his power had not prevailed.

After this, Hircuru returned to the hermitage.

But Mallaviyo Makanshah again asked the emperor to send for Hircuru.

The fakir had had a great pit dug in the ground of the court-yard, and a she-goat was secretly placed in that pit at evening-time. Then, that pit was covered with planks of wood and, over the planks carpets were spread.

So, Hircuru was called for the third time, and came accordingly. The emperor stood up, and asked him to come forward, but Hircuru refused to advance further replying that they would all sit where they were at the moment.

The emperor asked him what was the matter this time.

The *guru* replied: "There are animals under us, and we shall not come nearer."

¹ Vcer is a kind of elemental, corresponding to the Yidam, or thought form, of the Tibetans.

Maldeva said: "There are creatures beneath us."

The emperor said: "How many creatures are there?"

Maldeva replied: "Three."

Makansha fakir then said: "You are wrong; how do you make three creatures out of the one that is really there?"

Maldeva said: "There is no doubt that there are three creatures beneath us; you will find that we are right, and it is you who are wrong."

Then the emperor ordered the servants to remove the carpets.

When the carpets and planks were removed, they saw three animals there: the she-goat had been pregnant, and, owing to the heat, she had given birth to two young ones, before her time. Seeing the she-goat with her two kids, the emperor was astonished, and the fakir was again proved to be wrong.

Then Makanshah, by the help of genii, brought a great banyan tree from the Arban country, and planted it on the banks of the Jamna. The emperor said: "Now, Hirguru, you, too, send for something."

Immediately Maldeva sent for fifty-two Veer from Ashtrabolnagar, a distance of thirty-six thousand miles from the place, and they brought a garden from there and arranged it on the banks of the Jamna.

The emperor, seeing all the various kinds of flowers, the densely growing trees with fresh sprouts, was very pleased, and thought the garden as charming as one of those that grow in paradise.

Then, another wonderful miracle was performed; twenty-one stools were brought in and placed one on top of the other. Hirguru then sat on the last and the twenty stools underneath him were removed, leaving one stool only, which remained in the air without support.

The fakir tried his utmost to bring the stool down, but completely failed.

Then, the emperor bowed to Hirguru, and requested him to come down from the air.

In all, Hirguru performed twenty-one miracles ; and the emperor became greatly devoted to Hirguru.

The fakir was still undaunted. He made a boat of the shell of a coco-nut and sitting on it began to sail across the Jamna.

Maldeva told the *guruji* that the fakir was still unconvinced of the greater power of the other, and the emulation would continue unless something could be done to frighten the fakir. So Hirguru, with the help of Maldeva sat on a slab of stone, a hundred maunds in weight, and it was sent floating down the river Jamna.

All the assembled people, with the emperor himself, were the spectators of this fresh miracle.

At the time, Jagmal, to prevent the fakir worrying them further, called upon Veer to upset the boat of the fakir ; so, the Veer, increasing the motion of the stone, on which Hirguru was sitting, made it float in the direction of the coco-nut shell and dash against it ; the coco-nut shell was then overturned, and Makansha fakir began to drown in the waters of the river.

Hirguru felt compassion for him, and holding out his hand drew him out of the water. Then Makansha fakir falling at Hirguru's feet said, with folded hands : " Great is your religion ! You are victorious, and I own my defeat. I have seen with my own eyes the wonders that I had heard you perform. Now, have pity on me and forgive me."

Seeing these miracles, the emperor was lost in wonder, and getting up from his seat he, too, bowed to the *guru*, and with clasped hands said : " Holy *guruji* ! You are

great, so your religion must also be great. Your saintliness is beyond question. From this day onwards you are my *guru*, my *pir*, and I am your servant. I will give you horses, elephants, country, treasure, anything you like : choose whatever you desire."

But the compassionate Hircuruji said : "Have love for God. Have mercy on all creatures. Do not give pain to any creature. Consider the lives of all creatures like unto your own life. Your body suffers extremely even if pierced by a thorn, then how much more must the bodies of those whom you strike with weapons suffer ! If anyone tells you that when an animal is sacrificed it is sent to paradise and takes others there as well, then ask him the reason why he does not send, in similar fashion, his own parents, his brothers, his sisters, his sons and daughters to the coveted paradise. If all may go to paradise by the commitment of such sins, then who are the inmates of hell ? Therefore, O emperor, give me a promise to cease from committing sins."

Hearing these words of Hircuru, the emperor said : "Ah ! Allah ! What will be my condition in the future life ! I have, indeed, committed many evil actions, and what answer shall I give to God ? I have sent paradise far from me, and brought hell nearer to me. Therefore, O Hircuru, show me the way to escape hell." There and then, Hircuru gave him three remedies to enable him to become whole : firstly, to give money in charity ; secondly, to be kind to every living creature, and never kill a single one of them ; and thirdly, to pray to the true God. He should pray to God three times a day with hands clasped in prayer. "These," said the *guru*, "are the three preventives against hell-fire."

Then the emperor said : "I am ready to obey your words ; save or drown me, whichever you like : I sur-

render myself to you ; take even my throne of Delhi, but save me. I have been groping in the darkness up to this time ; I have committed many wicked deeds in the company of wicked persons. I have given much pain to other souls also. I have eaten uneatable things. Show me the way by which I may become free from all these sins."

Then, knowing the emperor to be sincere, the *guru* forbade him the doing of four things : the throwing of people into dungeons : the throwing of nets in the river and ponds, or the allowing of anyone else to throw them : and the eating of the tongues of sparrows and larks : and, for the fourth—the exacting of taxes and toll from Jain pilgrims on pilgrimage.

Up to now, pilgrims went to Shatrunjaya¹ only after payment from each of them of a tax of a gold mohur ; and from this tax alone the emperor received thirteen crores, ninety lakhs and ninety thousand annually ; and all this wealth came into his treasury.

The emperor agreed to forfeit this great sum, and agreed to the four injunctions, writing them down and sealing them with his own seal. The emperor then gave the title of *jagatguru* to Hirguru ; and acknowledged him as his religious preceptor.

The emperor said he would own no other except Hirguru as his *guru*.

Hirvijayasuri taught the emperor other ways by which he could acquire religious merit. He bade him take vows : to drink no wine, to eat no meat ; to observe the six *Athai* days, allowing no one in his realm to kill a single creature, and, still further, twelve more days when none might kill anything whatsoever, or even utter the word "kill," in each year.

¹ In *Plitanaa*.

The emperor agreed to all and accepted the Jain religion with fullest faith.

He learnt of the nine kinds of life¹ : understood the meaning of the liberated souls (the Tirthankars) and the uses of the teacher. The emperor discussed the religion in full with the *jagatguru*² and became a true Jain observing the twelve vows.

He attained excellence in the company of that excellent man. He would not take his meals before hearing some religious discourse, and without bowing to the Tirthankars and the *guru* every morning. He prayed to the *guru* with clasped hands, thus : "Holy, Hirguru ! Holy, *jagatguru* ! Your efforts have borne fruit, and I, too, have gained the fruit of my life. How fortunate that I have seen you, and have a *guru* like you ! Now I know that my sins have indeed vanished and I have become pure."

He kept Hirguru in the city of Delhi for many rainy seasons. Then Hirguru, in course of time, persuaded the emperor with great difficulty, to allow him to leave, and placing Upadhyay Shri Shantichandra *guru* in his place, took leave of the emperor and the *sangh*, after giving them some more religious teaching.

In course of time he came to Gujarat. The Jain community with Shri Vijayasrisuri was highly delighted on hearing of the conversion of the emperor. The fame of Hirguru spread far and wide, and the title of *jagatguru* was greatly appreciated. After two or three years had passed the emperor sent a messenger with a letter containing the praises of Shri Vijayahirsurishwarji³ and in that letter he desired the *guru* to send Shri Vijayasensuri to him as he wanted to see him as well. So, according to the order

¹ See the author's Mahâsmaśâna.

² World-teacher.

³ The introduction of the name of another monk in the biography of Hirguraji is extremely naïve and very human. One suspects the writer to be Vyayahersur himself or a favourite pupil.

of Shri Guruji, Shri Vijayasensuri started on an auspicious day, after prostrating himself before the *guru*.

He came to Radhanpur; then he came to Lahore, passing through Patan, Siddhpur, Palanpur, Sirohi, Jhalore, Pali, Medata, Sanganer and other places, and everywhere he preached the duties of religion to lakhs of people.

On hearing the news of his arrival, the emperor was very much delighted, and led him into Lahore, at an auspicious time, after receiving him with great pomp in a procession.

The emperor was delighted with the religious discussions of Shri Vijayasensuri.

In Lahore, at the court of the emperor, Shri Vijayasensuri had several discussions with men of other religions; and in these discussions he easily vanquished them and pleased the emperor.

The emperor gave him the name of Vijayahirsurisavai. He kept Shri Vijayasensuri for the rainy season; and the glory of religion was spread over Lahore. When the rainy season was over, Shri Vijayasensuri, according to the rule, desired to leave the city; but so urgent was the desire of the emperor that he should stay on that the Jain community urged him to do so; and he stayed for another rainy season, and further increased the glory of religion.

Then after the fifteenth day of the month of Kartik, Shri Vijayasensuri went on a pilgrimage to Shatrunjaya with the four communities; halting at different places till they, at last, reached Siddhgiri (Shatrunjaya). He worshipped Shri Rishabhdevji—the remover of sins—Shri Adinath—the support of all creatures: meditated on the Original cause—the son of Marudevi, worshipped by the world; and placed on each of their shrines gold and silver flowers.

After celebrating the *Athai Mahotsava* festival with

due ceremony he completed the pilgrimage, and, this lover of holy men, left the place and with a band of pilgrims passing through Ahmedabad, Patan, Palanpur, Sirohi, Medata, Malwa, Burhanpur, Ahmednagar, Devgiripatan, Agra, Allahabad reached Lahore.

The *sangb* entered the city with great pomp. The worshipful Vijayasensuri was led into the city after gold mohurs had been waved round¹ his head. He celebrated the *Athai* festival in Lahore. He spent wealth in seven holy places, and attained a great deal of merit and filled the treasure-houses of his merits to the full.

Now, *jagatguru* Shri Hirvijayasuri, according to the commandments of the scriptures, gave his villages as a present to Maldeva, inscribing his gift in due form on a copper-plate.

Shri guruji lived for one month at Siddhachal. Then he came to Div Unnatnagar after travelling through Junagadh and Veravalpatan. The Jain community insisted upon his staying there, so he stayed there by their request. The Jain community showed much devotion to the *guru*. Sanghvi Lakhiraj an inhabitant of Div and Parekh Sahsadant Meghji requested him to instal the idols of the Tirthankars in a temple which they built.

They, also, requested *shri guruji* to stay there for the rainy season. Many holy days were kept. In Innatnagar (Unna) the body of *shri guruji* fell seriously ill; and realising that the illness would end fatally, the Jain community sent an urgent letter to Shri Vijayasensuri in which they wrote: "The illness of the *guruji* is serious so if you desire to meet him, start at once."

Reading this letter, the teacher Vijayasensuri set out at once, though it was the rainy season, and reached Unna in due course. At the time of his arrival Shri Vimal-

¹ Nazar : still performed in India before all great personages.

harshgani and Shri Somavijaygani were reading before the *guruji* Ish-vekalik and Uttaradhyana and other books. The *guruji* gave beneficial advice to them all, and made recommendations regarding linealogy to the teachers.

Shri Hirsuri meditating on the sacred word "Om" left his body on the eleventh day of the bright half of Bhadarva of Samvat 1652.

At the time of his death, bells were heard ringing, and, even people of other religions say that, they saw a heavenly car coming down from the heavens.

The skies rained flowers, and a mango tree gave fruits out of season at the place where his dead body was burnt. It sprouted and bore fruit, and is still seen there bearing flowers and fruit all the year round.

In the town of Unna, the *guru's* glory is great, and miracles are still performed in that place, and the place is still worth worshipping. It is impossible to describe the glory of this great man.

Now Shri Vijayasensuri, bearing the title of Savai¹ came to the "gadi"² of Shri Hirvijayasuri.

He goes about the world purifying the world and preaching religion to all creatures.

¹ Literally 108, an honorific term.

² Shri Vijayasensuri being the principal pupil takes his guru's place. He was evidently alive when this account was written.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Firman of the Emperor Akbar dated 1592 A.D. in the thirty-seventh year of his reign.

Firman of JELALUDDIN MAHOMED AKBAR BADSHA,
THE VICTORIOUS.

Glory to religion and the world, Jelaluddin Akbar Badsha, the son of Humayaon Badsha, the son of Babar Badsha, the son of Shaikh Omer Mirza, the son of Sultan Aboo Syud, the son of Mahomed Mirza, the son of Meerum Shah, the son of Amir Tymoor, the Lord of happy conjunction (Jupiter and Venus).

SEAL

KNOW ! ye officers of the present and future times, and the Governor, Tax-Collectors, and the Jagirdars of the Subahs of Malwa (torn) of Akbarabad, the seat of Caliphs of Lahore, the Metropolis of Multan and Ahmedabad, the places of safety of Ajmer, the place of blessedness of Meerut, Gujarat and the Subah of Bengal and of other territories under our Government.

Whereas the whole of our noble thought and attention is directed to attend to the wishes and seek the pleasures of subjects, and the sole aim of our mind, which wishes well of all, is to secure the love and affection of the people and the ryots who are the noblest trust (committed to our charge) of the Lord, the great bestower of bounties ; and whereas our mind is specially occupied in searching for

the men of pure hearts, and those that are devotional, therefore, whenever tidings of any person or persons of any religion and creed passing his valuable time solely in contemplation of God comes to our ear, we become extremely desirous of ascertaining his virtues and intrinsic merits without any regard to his religion, faith or creed ; and, by laudable means and in honourable manner, we bring him from afar, admit him into our presence, and enjoy the pleasure of his company.

As many a time accounts of the godliness and austerities of Hur Bejoy Soor, an *acharya* (preceptor) of the Jain Sitambari sect and those of his disciples and followers who live at the ports of Gujarat, had come to our noble ear, we sent for and called him. After the interview which made us very glad, was over, he intended to take leave in order to return to his beloved and native country. He therefore requested that by way of extreme kindness and favour a Royal Mandate which is obeyed by all the world, be issued to the effect that the heaven-reaching mountains of Siddhachalji, Girnarji, Tarungaji, Kessurianathji and Abuji situate in the country of Gujarat and all the five mountains of Rajgirji, and the mountain of Somed Sekhurji alias Paresnathji, situate in the country of Bengal, and all the Kotees and all temples below the mountains, and all the places of worship and pilgrimage of (followers of) the Jain Sitambar religion throughout our empire, whatever they may be, be in his possession ; and that no one can slaughter any animals on those mountains and in the temples or below or about them. As he had come from a long distance and in truth his request was just and proper, and appeared not to be repugnant to the Mahomedan law ; it being the rule of the religious sages to respect and preserve all religions ; and as it became evident upon our enquiry and after thorough investigation that all those

mountains and places of worship really belong to the (followers of the) Jain Sitambari religions from a long space of time, therefore we comply with his request and grant to, and bestow upon, Hur Bejoy *acharya* of the Jain Sitambari religion the mountain of Siddhachal, the mountain of Girnar, the mountain of Tarunga, the mountain of Kesuria Nath, and the mountain of Abu lying in the country of Gujarat, and the five mountains of Rajgiree, and the mountain of Somed Sekhur otherwise called Pareshnath, situate in the country of Bengal, and all the places of worship and pilgrimage below the mountains and wherever these may be, any places of worship appertaining to the Jain Sitambari religion throughout our empire. It is proper that he should perform his devotion with ease of mind.

Be it known that, although these mountains and places of worship and pilgrimage, the seats of the Jain Sitambari religion, have been given to Hur Bejoy Acharya, yet in reality they all belong to the followers of the Jain Sitambari religion.

Let the orders of this everlasting *Firman* shine like the sun and the moon amongst the followers of the Jain Sitambari religion, so long as the sun, the illumination of the universe, continues to impart light and brightness to the day, and the moon remains to give splendour and beauty to the night. Let no one offer any opposition or raise any objection to the same, and let no one slaughter any animal, on, below, or about the mountains and in the places of worship and pilgrimage. Let the orders of this *Firman* be obeyed by all the world, be acted upon and carried out, and let none depart from the same or demand a new *sanad*. Dated the seventh of the month Urdu Bihisht, corresponding with the month Rabeoolawal of the thirty-seventh year of the auspicious reign.

Some Reviews on recent books by Elizabeth Sharpe

ON "THE KAULA CIRCLE"

Rarely does one come across a writer so refreshing. The ease with which she writes attracts the reader as much as the lucid exposition of her style.

We are aware that there has existed two kinds of *Acharyas* the *Dakshina* and the *Vama margas*. The Kaula circle has long been condemned from the days of Shankaracharya. The Brahmasutras have rejected these kinds of worship on the ground of their practices being opposed to the teachings of the Vedas.

[A. N. KRISHNA in *Brahmavidya*, "The Adyar Literary Bulletin," dated 9th September, 1937.]

"I am writing it down carefully for others to remember, for others to know the methods, others to heed the danger; for it is a greater one than they realise, and I believe the Unknown God bids me write."

"I hope the reading of this slender treatise will prevent the misguided enthusiasts of the world spilling the enthusiasm of youth before strange altars to unknown gods."

These two extracts establish the *bona fides* of the author. So far as India is concerned, the *vamachara* has been discredited at least from the time of Shri Shankara onwards who was—if he was the author of *Soundarya-Laobhari* as he is universally believed to be—a great *Sakta* himself. To us, in this country, there is nothing new in these revelations. It may, perhaps, serve a useful purpose so far as Western readers are concerned.

[“The Servant of India.”]

I find the translation of the MSS. on the *Science of Breath* appended to your work *The Secrets of the Kaula Circle* contains useful notes to practitioners of *pranayama*, especially for those who seek material advantages.

Have I your permission to reprint it and circulate same among the members of the “Order of Krishna”?

[Professor T. R. SANJIVI of the Order of Krishna, Editor, “The Latent Light Culture,” dated 4th May, 1937.]

The author appears to have studied Indian life with all its implications, very minutely.

The book is an interesting study especially for the occult world.

[“*The Kashmir Times*,” dated 30th March, 1937.]

The story is related in a fascinating and highly interesting manner.

The story also contains a remarkable chapter, about the Science of Breath and Breathing, which clearly shows us how slight and recent is our knowledge of this important subject.

[“*Pragger Presse*,” dated 23rd May, 1937.]

. . . . Miss Sharpe is an accomplished student, several of whose books have been reviewed in the Gateway. And she can hardly be termed a hostile student of the Kundalini Yoga. But this little volume is a most devastating tale of fictitious people. . . . In part 3 of this book is to be found a most interesting translation of a work on the Science of health as applied to divination.

[“*The Drew Gateway*,” July, 1937.]

. . . . Her most excellent work, *The Secrets of the Kaula Circle*, which should, in my humble opinion, have been published long ago.

It is published for the safety of womankind in India, safety from the Kaula Circle.

What the writer says of the mother and wife being interchangeable terms in the Kaula is not so only in the Akuttara Annaya—they are so in the Vania and Poorva Kaula.

The idol of Buddha is a small one at Kallip Psaram, 17 miles East of Alwaye station, Cochin railway, a large figure at Mavelikara 25 miles north of Quiton.

The menstruating figure is at Chengannur, a small township 26 miles north of Kottarakarai railway station, near Quiton.

[PARAMESHAVARA BHIKSHU, Author of “*Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga*”
(Yogi Publication Society of Chicago), dated 17th November, 1937.]

Ramdas congratulates the writer on the bold stand she has taken in condemning the impure practices of the Circle. She has brought out the work at the most opportune time. He wishes all success to it in its laudable mission of dispelling the false notions held by some regarding the great Tantrik doctrine.

[MAHATMA RAMDAS, Editor “*Vision*,” dated 18th March, 1938.]

REVIEWS ON "AN EIGHT HUNDRED YEAR OLD
BOOK OF INDIAN MEDICINE AND FORMULAS."

Highly useful to research workers in the field of medical science.

[*"Oriental Literary Digest,"* 1937.]

Valuable for students of the history of Indian medicines.

[*"The Drew Gateway,"*]

To those interested in the study of Hindu medicine from a scientific form of view—this ought to prove highly welcome.

[*"The Mysore Economic Journal,"* 1938.]

Elizabeth Sharpe is famous for her sympathetic understanding of the Indian people, and has proved herself qualified to write very good books on Indian thought and culture.

An interesting book . . . unique in that the author was able to get at some original records not easily accessible.

[*"The Servant of India,"* 18th November, 1937.]

One of the most valuable features of this translation is the attempt to identify the crude drugs mentioned in the recipes, and the compilation of an index of the vernacular names with the corresponding English and scientific equivalent.

[*"The Royal Central Asian Society,"*]

Man is known by his medicines as well as by his meats, and the vast tradition of Eastern knowledge and experience is indicated in the strange and often fantastic pharmacopoeia of Oriental remedies. The present example "translation from the original very old Hindi into Gujarati character and thence into English," was compiled by a pupil of the great Jain priest Hemchand, and contains prescriptions for more than a hundred different types of ailment. Many of these are obscure or impracticable, but others deserve careful investigation and may yield suggestions to the modern research worker.

[*"Times Literary Supplement,"* dated 7th August, 1937.]

The remedies are certainly curious and comprehensive.

Most alluring are the complex formulae which purport to the "very secret" prescriptions of those mysterious pills, powders, oils and edible ointments (medical ghees) which are offered for sale in every Indian bazaar. One cannot help feeling that Harley Street would be interested.

[*"The Nafis Magazine," July, 1937.*]

These formulas will be a source of interest to medical men, of amusement to laymen and of great value as a contribution to the old manuscripts of India.

[*"The Times," of Malta, July 7th, 1937.*]

**"THE PHILOSOPHY OF YOGA": CONTAINING THE MYSTERY
OF SPIRIT AND THE WAY OF ETERNAL BLISS**

Everyone interested in the Yoga Philosophy should not fail to read this unique work.

[*"The Vision,"* October, 1933.]

The earnest student of Yoga will no doubt welcome the little book as a lucid introduction to an abstruse subject.

[*"United India and Indian States,"* 4th November, 1933.]

Buried in this little volume of profound thought and passionate sincerity are one or two theories which will provoke cutting criticism.

[*"The Illustrated Weekly of India,"* 11th June, 1933.]

**"THE TANTRIK DOCTRINE OF IMMACULATE CON-
CEPTION": CULLED FROM MOST ANCIENT OCCULTISM OF INDIA,
THE SHAKTA-KAULA: NEVER BEFORE WRITTEN IN A BOOK BUT
HANDED DOWN FROM TEACHER TO PUPIL.**

Miss Elizabeth Sharpe needs no introduction. She is a scholar of Hindu philosophy and religion and has written thought-provoking books like *The Flame of God* and the *The Philosophy of Yoga*.

This little book of Miss Sharpe's will be heartily received by the scholar and the philosopher and will meet with the warm approbation of both.

[*"The Illustrated Weekly of India,"* 4th March, 1934.]

"SHRI KRISHNA AND THE BHAGAVAD GITA"

Miss Sharpe's book came as a very agreeable surprise: the lady has got at the kernel of the teaching. Her book is very much more valuable than Dr. Besant's *Gita* or Arnold's *Song Celestial*, very much better than Edgerton's book. The book has given us many thoughts. . . . This book is really a godsend.

[*"The Kalpaka,"*]

"SHIVA OR THE PAST OF INDIA."

A book that will add dignity to any Publisher's list—a book essentially for the scholar.

Extract from a letter from Rider & Co.

"This important monograph expounds a new and ingenious theory of the worship of the phallic emblem of Shiva. It throws a lucid light on the mystery which surrounds Shiva."

[*"The Servant of India," 5th November, 1931*]

This book of 38 pages is a work of reverence and love. Miss Elizabeth Sharpe has brought an understanding mind to bear upon the worship of Shiva. Miss Elizabeth Sharpe has effectively shown that the Shiva who is worshipped is in reality one that "dances on the deer-skin of the dead animal senses."

[*"The Pioneer," 9th June, 1930.*]

A brilliant study of the concept Shiva.

[*"The Kalpaka," July, 1930.*]

"THE FLAME OF GOD": A MYSTICAL AUTO-BIOGRAPHY.

The Flame of God bears a difficult, almost painful, message; but it is a book of profound thought, absorbing interest, and passionate sincerity.

[*JOHN FOLEY in "The Pioneer," 1st January, 1932.*]

The Flame of God is a mystical auto-biography. In it she has recorded her personal experiences which clearly indicate how earnest and sincere have been her attempts in search of reality.

[*"United India and Indian States," 23rd August, 1930.*]

"THE INDIA THAT IS INDIA."

Rarely does one come across a book so sincere and so correctly informed as Miss Sharpe's.

PROF. K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR, M.A., in the "*Sunday Chronicle*,"
5th January, 1935.]

There is a great ease, lucidity and charm about Miss Sharpe's descriptions of Indian life. She displays an intimate acquaintance with all phases of it.

[*"The Civil and Military Gazette," January 28th, 1935.*]

The book comes to us like an eastern breeze out of thousands of villages where real India exists.

[“*The Illustrated Weekly of India*.”]

This little book is pleasantly written. . . . The descriptions of Indian fairs, Indian beliefs and superstitions, are brightly written.

[“*The Times Literary Supplement*.”]

In reading this book we feel we meet an old and much esteemed friend. India knows well the author already as an able expounder of her abstruse philosophy to the West. Many of us have read her book on Yoga. In the present volume, which she justly entitles *The India that is India*, she explains to her countrymen the meaning of many of those Indian customs and ideas which to the European are bound to be puzzling and not a little funny.

The book touches many sides of Indian life and describes all grades of the Indian population. There is in all Miss Sharpe's utterances a refreshing candour rare in books of the kind to which they belong. *The India that is India* is a volume that is particularly full of the Beauty of Truth.

[“P.S.A.” in “*The Servant of India*,” 23rd April, 1936.]

“THE GREAT CREMATION GROUND”: A CRITICAL DISSERTATION ON INDIAN PHILOSOPHY.

This is the first part of what Miss Elizabeth Sharpe intends to be a large book collating studies in Indian philosophy. It is a critical dissertation on the philosophy of the Upanishads and the Jains and reveals an astounding depth of knowledge and understanding of the Indian way of thinking. Miss Sharpe has an interesting and lucid style and adopts the useful practice of explanatory side-headings in the margin.

[“*The Times of Malta*,” September 1st, 1938.]

ON INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Elizabeth Sharpe who has become well known through a series of profound researches in Indian philosophy and Culture, discourses in an intricate treatise *The Great Cremation Ground—Mahasmasana* (London, 1938, Luzac & Co.), the Upanishads in their relation to the philosophy of Jainism. This teaching is like Buddhism anti Vedic but, as the author explains, Jainism is also anti Buddhist, for it represents an optimistic philosophy of life.

[“*Prager Presse*,” 16 October, 1938.]

"THE GREAT CREMATION GROUND" (MAHÂŚMAŚÂNA);
A CRITICAL DISSERTATION ON INDIAN PHILOSOPHY.

. . . On the whole she is successful. . . .

. . . Useful to understand how a rationalist looks at Indian systems of philosophy.

[*"Oriental Literary Digest."* 1938. No. 6.]

THE TANTRIK SECRET OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

It is a jewel and has given to me moments of beautiful conception.

[*Editor "Gnosis," Montevideo, Uruguay.*]

